MILITARY Miniatures

IN REVIEW

Pretty Panzer

Yet another hit from Tamiya

KMC's 75mm M3 motor carriage conversion

Son of Kong: Commander's M41

Tamiya's new Kübelwagon

H&K Unic Halftrack

R&J's new Brümmbar conversion

Accurate Armour's mighty Conqueror

CMD's Beobachtung Panther conversion

Maquette T-34 conversion

On Track Model's K18 Panzer IV

WARNING: The content of this magazine has been known to cause both geekyness and dweebyness in laboratory animals.

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No. 13
SUMMER 1997

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★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ IN REVIEW ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

C O N T E N T S

In Review

Pleasing Panzer 13
The new Tamiya Panzer III. Yummy.

KMC and the GMC 16
Kendall Model Co. takes on the Tamiya M21 to create a 75mm M3.

Son of Kong 21
Commander Series introduces a fine looking M41 motor carriage.

Kübel Lives! 25
Tamiya's teeny new car.

Le half track 29
H&K's Unic in German Service.

Brümmbar! 33
A smashing new conversion from the folks at R&J.

Heavy Metal Monster 37
The mighty Conqueror heavy tank from Accurate Armour.

Rockin' to the Beobach 42
A simple conversion from CMD for the Italeri Panther.

Supersize Tiger 46
Detailing the old Bandai 1/15th scale Tiger I.

Russian Russian T-34 51
An interesting conversion kit ala Maquette and Zvesda.

Mad Max 54
The spanking new all resin K18 kit from On Track Model Co.

Page 21

Page 25

Page 33

Page 37

Features

The Mail Sack 3
The readers speak.

Short Takes 5
A look at all the latest dope from around the world.

Mini-Men 58
A peek at what's new on the figure front.

ON THE COVER:

We thought it was so nice we built two! Chris Mrosko's Panzer III from Tamiya graces our cover while Bob Oehler's tasty looking review begins on page 13. Chris's model uses Friulmodelissmo tracks and is marked using the Stencil-It system. He built it as a straight L version while Bob converts his slightly (and easily) to the earlier J model.

From Your Editor

Weathering and color. In the modeling world those two subjects are quite a mouthful. I've seen airplane guys virtually come to blows over the proper shade of Luftwaffe "Blau." To be honest, we're not much better on the armor side. The arguments over olive drab and panzer gray have dragged on for a long time. I find this whole thing fascinating because the two subject words are very much inter-related. Weathering clearly affects the color of any given vehicle. And, oh how many other variables there are when it comes to determining the "proper" color in teeny 1/35th scale.

In a recent issue of *Armor Modelling* magazine from Japan there was an article on the colors of German armor and how to properly interpret them from black and white photos. Interpret? Yep. Two very interesting illustrations accompanied this article. One was a color corrected photo of three color chips; dark yellow, dark green and dark red brown. The basic Big Three of German armor colors. The chips were provided by RAL in Germany. The second illustration was the very same photo, but this time in black and white. Trust me when I tell you that it was very difficult to tell the difference between all the colors (the dark yellow appeared a bit lighter).

The point here is that almost all the reference we have at our disposal is in black and white. Over the years, this has lead to more than a few mistakes in the way we think of late war German armor. For instance, for the longest time it was thought that the Germans reverted back to panzer gray at the end of the war. Through published translations of German wartime orders we now know this to be ca-ca. The Germans did flop their three color scheme in late 1944, replacing their Dunkelgelb with Dunkelgruen as a base color (at least on Panthers—for some reason the description of RAL 6003 changes from Olivgruen to Dunkelgruen on this date as well). Perhaps "gruen" was confused with "grau" at some point.

There still is an awful lot of fighting going on about the proper shades of the following colors: U.S. olive drab, Afrika Korps yellow and German dark gray. The question of olive drab seems to be not only what exact shade it really was, but did it change from time to time. I've talked to a few folks who still doubt the very existence of Afrika Korps yellow, conjecturing that it was just a precursor to Dunkelgelb. The jury still seems to be out on what color those Tunisian Tigers were, too. And good ol' Panzer gray. Was it really, really dark (the Spanish referred to the German tanks used during their civil war as los Negros, "the black ones") or did it also fade like our friend OD? (got a headache yet?)

What else is there to learn? Well, all the pictures and information are out there, we just have to discover it. Some of it is right under our noses, too. There has been an Osprey title regarding U.S. camo out for years (Vanguard 39), but I don't hear it talked about too much. This is a very revealing booklet and the author rather cautiously estimates that at least ten percent of all U.S. vehicles had camo paint on top of their OD. I personally think it's a bit higher, especially within certain units, but probably not too much higher. Not only do I not hear much about this book, I rarely see U.S. armor models camo'd up.

I recall having a conversation with a friend's father who had fought in the 1st Infantry Division (the Big Red One) in WW2. His travels had taken him from Tunisia to Sicily, to Normandy (via Omaha), through France and then Czechoslovakia. His walking tour took him through several different German camo schemes (although I'm sure he could have cared less at the time). I put a question to him: what color were German tanks in the war? He pondered over this for some time. His first response was that they were just "gray." But he did take my question seriously. He went digging into his old photos and mulled over the subject for about a week. When he finally did give me an answer, he said: "I'm sticking to my original answer: the tanks were gray." He went on to elaborate that they were a dingy shade of pale, filthy, yellowish-gray.

Now I'm not trying to say that all German tanks are gray, but my point is that the effects of weathering on a paint job can be so severe as to actually make the vehicle part of the background. Factory fresh is one thing, extended field use is yet another.

Has anyone out there seen the pictures of armor deployed in Bosnia? There have been a few good things in print and smaller articles and photos can be found in Newsweek and TIME. In our end of the world there is the recent W&G book, *IFOR: Allied Forces in Bosnia*, a couple of good titles from Concord and the English magazine *Military Modelling* has had several excellent color articles regarding Brit and U.S. armor in Bosnia.

Now I noticed several interesting things about the modern tanks in these pictures. First of all, they are really dirty. This dirt takes the form of your basic mud. Mud stuck in the fenders and running gear and, of course, the tracks. Next is what I'll just call over spray. What it looks like is over spray from an airbrush. Sort of a light GRAYISH tan sprayed over the lower part of the vehicle. I'm guessing this is caused by the misting effect of dirt particles and water (a.k.a. MUD) as the vehicle runs on a hard surface. After a few days (hours) of this it starts to build up into a solid transparent color. The base colors all show through this over spray, with more of the original vehicle color showing through the upper surfaces, such as the turret. More interesting things happen when this stuff gets wet or as it begins to dry out from being wet. Darker areas form around roadwheel hubs and especially in the rear areas of the vehicles where more water and other wet junk gets thrown up.

The former Yugoslavia doesn't differ significantly from the countryside of any other European nation when it comes to basic weather and geography. It's temperate, meaning it gets hot in the summer and cold in the winter (very cold, I hear). It rains, it snows, it sleets. Most of their roads are either paved or hard pack. Not at all unlike France, Luxembourg, Holland, Germany or even central and northern Italy. So here is the ten thousand dollar question. **Do tanks get dirty in a different way in Europe in 1997 than they did in 1944?** I say no. I think we should pay very close attention to these photos. Although they will not answer all of our many color questions, they do effectively solve the riddle of how a tank gets dirty in the European countryside.

As to other color questions, I guess it's up to a future author. Most of what we now read was originally published in the seventies and early eighties. I'm all for someone coming up with a new, definitive reference on color, either German or U.S.—or both. It's about time.

—Pat Stansell

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The Mail Sack

That's Mr. Geek to you

The best part of this magazine is the editorial. I always study it very well because it is very relevant e.g. "Mr. Serious vs. Mr. Normal Geek." Because of Mr. Serious's threats and bullying many of my fellow modellers had quit or gone "underground," except me of course, to encourage others and beginners to continue. Mr. Serious's group also refuses to share their "talents and secrets" which we need very much. But now, because of MMiR I don't think I need them anymore because I get very valuable info from you guys. Thanks!

Why don't you geeks show yourselves in a group picture in MMiR so we could get to know you guys better.

—Eugene Yap

Um.. O.K. Here are a few shots of our staff. The shot at left is your editor. It's said the resemblence is striking... Below is a recent staff meeting where the idea of tuna in a can with mayonnaise was discussed at length.

✉

Chock Talk

First of all—great magazine! Just too bad it doesn't come out weekly. I'm finished with the double issue and it's only been three days.

In your Hemmit article on page 37 (and photo on 39) you modeled a rack ("purpose unknown") on either side of the truck. This installed rack was used to hold the two chock blocks for the tires when the vehicle was parked. Often times there was a small chain that was fitted to the rings and to the blocks to discourage theft. It sounds strange, but in some Army units the "right-sized" (especially if they were the rubber type) chock blocks were worth their weight in gold. They were always an inspection item and were accountable to the poor sucker who had to sign for (and be financially responsible for) all equipment on his vehicle.

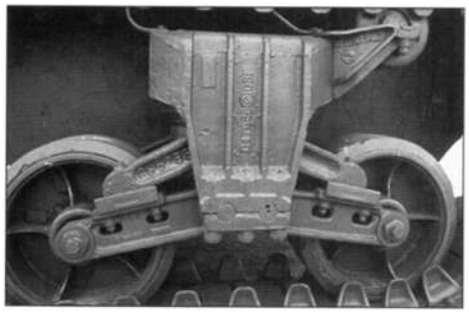
—Tony Wilsbacher
wilsbacher@earthlink.net

Ah-Ha! One more item for the aftermarket!

✉

Gumby and Spokey

I am a subscriber to your magazine and I find it very useful for my modeling projects (I have been modeling for over 30 years now). You have improved constantly since your first issue. Lately I have followed with great interest the series written by Pete Harlem about the Sherman tank, because I am presently building a collection of Shermans in 1/35th scale.



Enclosed you will find two pictures I took last summer when I visited a small Maginot Line Memorial close to the German border, near Colmar, Alsace, France.

The M4A1 76mm (w) VVSS is supposed to represent the first Free French tank that entered Colmar in 1944-45. As you can see from one of the pictures, this Sherman features a type of road wheels that are a hybrid between two types described by Mr. Harlem in part 4 of his series (see MMiR #9, page 14). The open spoke type and the solid spoke type. Indeed, the spokes are not simply embossed (in fact, they are real) but the "holes" between the spokes are closed. The tank has some unusual features for a M4A1 of 1944-45, such as a tarpaulin around the turret shield and a muzzle brake. However, when I came back from my trip I searched through the literature to find something about those strange looking wheels. On page 37 of *Sherman in Action*, Squadron Signal Publications (#16), I discovered a picture of an M4A3 75mm (w) VVSS photographed in Germany in February 1945 featuring these mystery wheels. Thus it cannot be a post-war mod and at least one more Sherman road wheel variant should be considered.

I hope this small finding will give readers of MMiR a contribution about their knowledge of the Sherman tank. I also hope to see other articles in this series. One concerning turrets certainly would be terrific!

—Dr. Alberto M. Martelli

Pete says: Well I said there were more... So far we have identified two vehicles in photos that have these wheels. In both cases they are full sets rather than partials. One other interesting detail on these wheels is the small (2 by 1 inches) pieces of steel that are tack welded onto the face of the wheel in certain places. This may be to balance the wheel.

There may be more Shermans out there that used these wheels, but given how muddy some of the wheels get, it may be impossible to tell from a wartime photo.

If anyone else turns one up, let us know.

Numero Uno

Patrick Agte's book on the LAH and the Tiger raise some questions from its illustrations. There are several styles of numbers shown; some companies have different colored numbers from others, some appear from a distance not to be surrounded by a thin colored border color, while close-up photos at other times do show the colored outline. In order to model Tigers from SS units, we need claritfication of number styles and we need decals. Is there a supplier of Tiger numbers in various styles?

—Reed R. Treible

Good point. There are several sheets out there, but none cover all Tiger units. Azimut of France has two dry transfer sets which contain several Tiger unit markings and numbers. Admittedly, these can be a little tough to find but the stock numbers are 35703 and 35704.

Tamiya's "now you see 'em, now you don't" series of decals contain excellent versions of Tiger markings. Sheet B (66526) has a smattering of unit markings, including two types of LAH signs and the interesting "lucky Tiger" Chinese character symbol. Sheet D (66613) is probably their best when it comes to the Tiger. The sheet is almost exclusively devoted to the Tiger and includes dozens of tac signs and numbers for both the Tiger I, Tiger II and supporting Panzer III Ns. One of the better features of this sheet are the heavy tank unit logos such as the 502's Mammut and the 509's yellow and black tiger head.

The biggest drawback of any of these products is that none of them has adequate documentation. You'll still need to be armed with your references before you use them.

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Shrinkage: Bad

Just a quick comment on the change in the format of the Mini-Men section. I don't like it nearly as well as the more lengthy narrative format. While the photos are great and it's nice to scan the "Gallery" for the right pose, I really appreciated the detailed analysis of uniforms and equipment that was provided in the old format. That was educational and has helped in evaluating and converting figures other than the ones reviewed. Even if my view is in the minority I urge you not to dump the earlier format completely. How about alternating approaches from issue to issue?

Either way you do a nice job. I routinely refer to back issues, even though I read one cover to cover on receipt. The best part is that you help make tough choices on where to spend relatively scarce modeling dollars.

—Jim Paquet

O.K. we hear ya. Jim's comment came prior to the release of 11-12 which saw yet another change in Mini-Men. As we have stated, the primary reason for the format change is the shear volume of pieces being released. There is simply no way our teeny staff could digest all these pieces to the level we did in the earlier issues.

To be honest this relates mainly to the old bugaboo: deadline. We are always exploring ways to get the mag out closer to the assigned dates. Streamlining Mini-Men helps this immensely. What foils the "wordier" format on a regular basis is companies like Azimut, Jaguar, Verlinden and Warriors. They seem to have struck a vein and are mining it for all it's worth. We can see a day when releases slow and we do go back to the older format, but it probably won't be this year.

✉

Pete Never Sleeps

I was recently introduced to your fine magazine (your double issue 11-12) by my local hobby shop and really enjoyed it! While I understand your reluctance to enter into personal correspondence with writers, hopefully my dilemma is worth at least a short answer in your Mail Sack.

I have recently re-entered the wonderful world of 1/35 scale armor after a lay off of several years. My current interest is in modeling various versions of the Sherman. While I have quite a few references for configurations and markings, my confusion is over track color! I understand the solid block looking tracks should be black rubber blocks with metal end connectors, and that the later versions in British service are solid steel, but various references seem to list various compositions for other Sherman tracks.

Perhaps a brief review of the different model tracks and suggested colors would be in order? Thanks for any light you can throw on this confusing item.

Once again, being new to your magazine perhaps this is an item you have dealt with in a back issue, if so, which issue and is it still available.

—Marc Rebhun

Petey reviews: Rubber block tracks are the T41, T51 flats; WE212 waffle; T47E1 4-bar grouser; T48 chevron; and T74 curved chevron.

Steel block types are the T49 3-bar grouser: T54E1, T54E2 chevrons, and T56 3-bar.

Types T56E1 or equivalent and T62 chevron with studs on the face are composite construction of rubber and metal.

Figure 4, page17 of MMiR number 8 tells it all for the VVS. The HVSS is either steel (T66 single pin or T80 chevron) or rubber (T84 chevron) blocked. In all cases the guide teeth, duckbills, grouser bars, end connectors and bolts are steel.

It's strictly up to you as to which colors to use. Some Shermy builders prefer a distinctive rusty appearance for the steel parts (using a dark orangy-red wash) while others like the shiny steel look obtained by lightly drybrushing a silver color over darker steel.

There are dozens of products out there, but the new line of acrylic metallics from Polly-Scale is pretty easy to use and comes in a wide range of shades.

✉

Porsche pondering

My question is about the experimental Tiger I, VK-4501. Porsche version. Did any of these ever make it into battle as is, or were they all transformed into the Ferdinand or Elephant tank destroyers? Does anyone make a photo-etched or detail set of these? I have some FM white metal tracks and an Elephant/Ferdinand detail set from ABER (Poland/ have you seen these? very nice!). I saw a three-color toned, zimmerit covered one in a PanzerFile, that seems so wrong. What do you think? Impossible? I am looking for books or photos to document this project. I need help.

Oh, by the way I was watching Kelly's Heroes. What's up with those Tiger Tanks? The turrets looked all right but what the hell was the bottom part from?

—Gary Glover

Yes, the Porsche Tiger did see at least operational use. Two were ordered by the commander of the 653 Schwere Panzerjäger and used at the battle of Kursk. Their fate is unknown. The tank you saw in PanzerFile is spot on, being a conversion based on photos of the 653 tanks.

You too can do this by using the turret from the Tamiya Tiger (the roof is flat) and the Italeri Tiger P kit. The Scottish company Accurate Armour also makes a really cool conversion kit in resin. It's expensive but very comprehensive (decals, brass the whole nine yards). Look for kit number C35. Squadron Mail Order is known to carry AA stuff.

There are photos of these tanks in Spielberger's Schwere Jagdpanzer (German text) and in the upcoming History of the 653 Heavy tank Destroyer Battalion from Fedorowicz Publishing.

Oh—the Tigers in Kelly's Heroes are T-34s modified to look like the real thing. Supposedly this was done at the urging of Donald Sutherland and Clint Eastwood who have been rumored to be dyed in the wool tank geeks (how cool is that?).

✉

Got a problem with any of this?

Send those comments to: Mail Sack, Military Miniatures in Review or discuss complaints, problems, wisecracks, etc. via the Internet. Find us at the handle: ***MMiR35701@aol.com***

Letters are sometimes edited for brevity, grammar, spelling, national security concerns and other stuff.

We sincerely regret that we rarely, if ever, are able to personally enter into correspondence with our readers.

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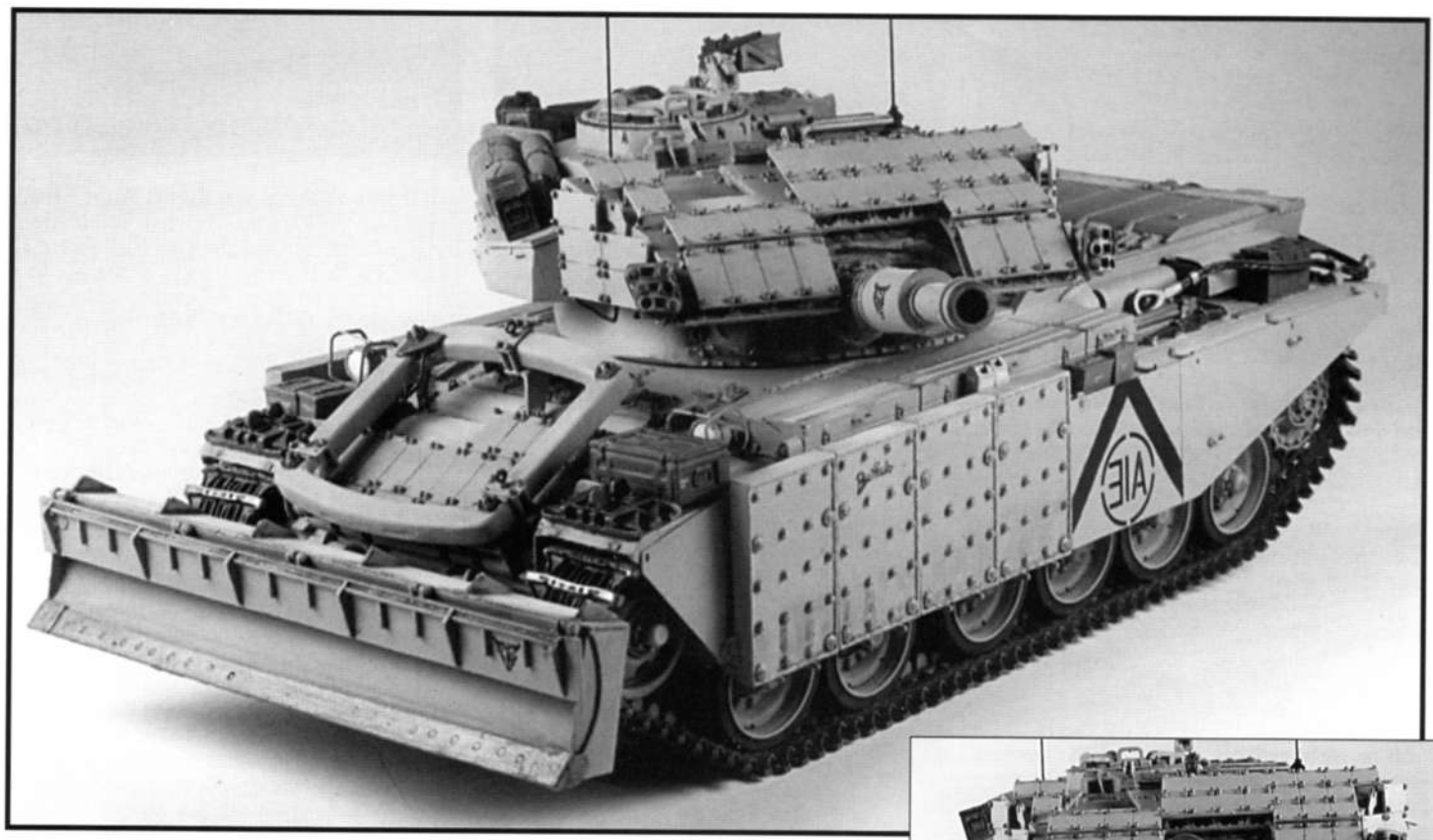
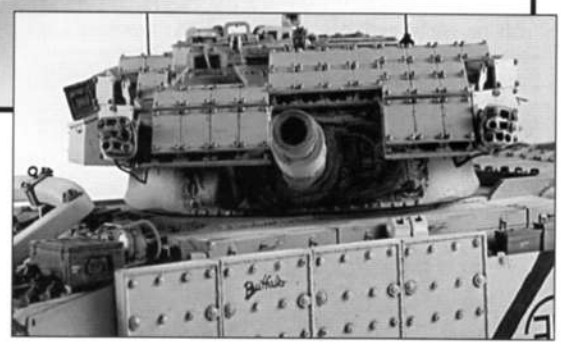
Short Takes

The Year in Preview





Accurate Armour

AA was kind enough to send us along a cool selection of photos of their new **Centurion AVRE 165 (Gulf War)**. This is their typical resin, PE and white metal deal. It makes up the ultra long-in-the-tooth version of the Centurion used in the 1991 conflict. It's kind of hard to believe that the use of this tank spans almost fifty years. The model is all decked out with the up-armored lower hull, passive side armor, reactive turret and hull front armor, smoke dischargers and MIMIC coil. AA likes to do the value thing, so the kit includes all the equipment, stowage and fittings needed to really trick it out. Interesting to note that the kit is specifically described as "minus facine cradle." Some of AA's other engineering vehicles have been released in different configurations, so maybe we'll see more of the 165.

AA's kit number here is K76 and the listed UK retail is $87.50. This is usually higher outside Great Britain. Squadron Signal is "The Man" in the U.S.

AFV Club

Update city. It turns out that AFV will release its **Scorpion** here after all. Rumor has it that this will be a special version of the kit with resin parts to create the earlier version of the Scorpion, PLUS all the parts to build the Scimitar, too. Excellent! Item number AF-13513 should be available right this minute for a mere $39.98.

Hang in there, cuz' the **M18** is still on the way. It also is due out any second and it'll include some cool little details like a turned metal barrel and a super detailed .50 cal. Hmmmm... It's still number AF-3515 and the price is TBA.

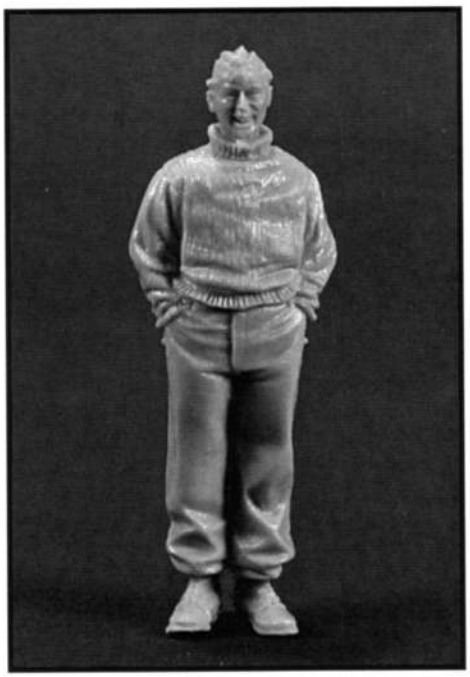
To go along with is a new **ammo set**. AF-3518 is a turned brass situation containing four each of M42A1 (high explosive), M62A1 (armor-piercing cap w/tracer), M79 (armor piercing), M39 (high velocity armor piercing w/tracer) and four empty casings. Suitable (of course) for the M18 but also for any 76mm armed Sherman or the M10. All this brass happiness is only $14.98.

Right on top of all this comes the **Weisel TOW** version. Betcha this is teeny. Look for stock number AF-3514 and a retail of $29.98.

Check with your local retail-type dude for current info.

CMD

Otherwise known as Chesapeake Model Designs, will soon make a bit of a stir in the figure world. Due to the mysterious machinations of the enigmatic mind of Bill Miley, CMD will soon begin producing the work of Japanese figure modeler



CMD's new figures.

Hirano Yoshi. Now the name might not ring a bell, but his work is fairly well-known. His figures have graced the cover of the first *Models in Action* (the Normandy one) and at least one of the Model Art specials. In the past, Yoshi-san has sculpted only for his own dioramas. A very limited number of castings were sometimes made available in Japan, but nothing even approaching large scale production. Enter CMD. They have acquired several masters and will begin production soon. So far the line is very exciting. It is composed of all German subjects, but each is very dramatic and they are all executed in superb fashion. The style is highly distinctive. So far we have received test castings of several of the line and some of these are shown in the accompanying photos.

We have yet to receive precise stock numbers or pricing on each piece. However, we have been told to expect a retail in the $11 to $12 range. Look for more dope in the Mini-Men section of Issue 14.

More news on the CMD front is that we can look for two new versions of the **M4 105 turret**. These will be early and late versions of the howitzer armed Shermy. Each will include a partial interior (just the stuff you can see through the hatches—elevation/traverse mechanism and seats). Each turret comes packed in a box with a color photo on top. Pricing and stock numbers are TBA, but anticipate an approximately $25 retail.

Oh—and by the way, the **M48** should be out by the time you read this. For address information, see the CMD ad elsewhere in the issue.

Custom Dioramics

CD's release list for the warming season is as follows.

CD-147 is a **German Strong point** (1/35). This is a concrete type bunker which includes a hunk of camo net for $15.95.

CD-1109 is **Gray Hexagonal Cobblestones** (1/35). $6.95 buys you a bag of individual cobblestones cast in gray plaster. CD-1110 is the identical product in a brick red color. A tedious, but super realistic way of creating a scale street.

CD-8004 makes up into **HO-OO Wood Bridge** (multi-scale). This is a wooden type trestle bridge of the type thrown up (and down) by engineers of all nations. It's listed as multi-scale, so it could be a armor bearing bridge in the smaller scales and a lighter rated bridge in 1/35th. $15.50 takes it home.

CD-148 is a ceramic cast **Stone Bridge**. This is a small stone span with a cobblestone pattern roadway. All for the price of $15.95.

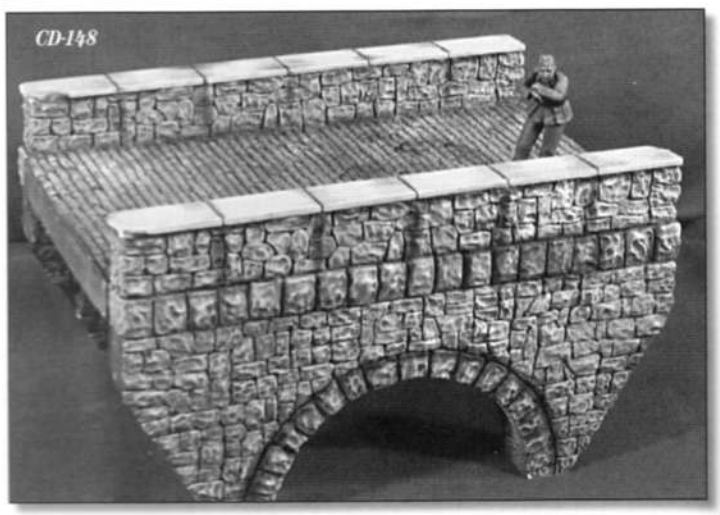
Custom Dios has gone webby. Their new website address is http://www.customdio.com and the sight (or is it site?) will include helpful articles on their products and other useful information. For more skinny on CD, see their ad in these here pages.

Empire Models

New to us and therefore to at least some of you, Empire offers up a line of decals for both 1/35th and 1/72nd scale armor.

The line is called **Panzer Prints** and sets D 35/1 through D 35/4 are vehicular sets for 1/35th Brit armor (or should we say armour?). They all retail for a whopping six bucks. Sets D 76/1 through D 76/5 are for 1/76 scale vehicles and may be suitable for 1/72, too. These include smaller sheets, as in the 1/35th line, plus a large sheet of German AFV numbers (D 76/5). The small sheets are also $6.00, but the large number sheet is $15.00.

CD-147



CD-148

These decals are not waterslide, but rather a unique "in-between" system where the decals are cut from a sandwiched sheet, placed in the correct position and dabbed with water from a cotton swab. Once the carrier is soaked, the sheet can be carefully removed and the decal patted down and allowed to dry. The manufacturer does recommend over coating with matte varnish like a waterslide decal. Verdy inter-resting.

For more information on the line, contact Empire Models, RR 3 Box 900, Morrisville, VT 05661. Their phone number is 802-888-4948 and you can e-mail 'em at empire@pwshift.com

Eduard

A very busy quarter for the Ford Motor of photo-etch. Look at all this stuff: 35-130 is a set for the Italeri **Mercedes-Benz L3000**. Big brass and clear gauge inserts. $14.99. 35-132 is for the DML **Grille Ausf. H** kit. Pretty extensive for $19.99. Number 35-133 is for the Academy **Tiger I**. This set is listed as an exterior set, which indicates they will be working (or are) on a set for the interior, too. Also extensive, this one is $19.99. 35-135 is for detailing out the newish Tamiya **Churchill Mk VII**, also $19.99. 35-137 decks out the Italeri **Jagdpanther** for $14.99.

Eduard also has begun to branch out into 1/48th scale (stock numbers beginning with a "two-eight"). They now have sheets for the following small scale kits. 28-001 is for the Frog/Fuman **Willys Jeep**. $14.99. 28-002 is for the Frog/Fuman **M4A3 Sherman**. The Sherman set is $14.99. Set 28-003 is for the Bandai **Valentine Mk. III** for $14.99.

Eduard has offered 1/72nd scale sets for some time and a new addition to this line is 22-020, **US-6 Studebaker Truck**. This set is designed for the Co-operativa kit and retails for $11.99.

Eduard represents a number of product lines from Eastern Europe. New is **FM Models** and there are two new products to date. The first is a 1/72nd scale kit of the **German Opel Blitz Fuel Truck**. This is stock number FM72-01 and it retails for $34.99.

The second new item is a **Panther F "schmalturm" Turret**. This set includes a large resin turret and detail parts, along with a significant hunk of photo-etch brass. The retail is $49.99.

Both FM kits contains exceptionally well-done instruction sheets with clear concise line drawings and English directions. Good show.

For ordering and catalog information see the Eduard ad in this general vicinity.

Darlington

Darlington has announced a new series of soft cover books, all pertaining to German AFVs. The title of the series will be "Panzer Tracts" and all will be authored by Thomas Jentz and also will contain drawings by Hilary Doyle.

It is said that the series will eventually number 20 titles and cover over 350 vehicles.

For more skinny on these titles has they come about, contact Darlington Productions, Inc., P.O. Box 5884, Darlington, MD 21034. Their phone is 410-457-5400 and the fax is 5480. E-mail them at DPI14@aol.com

Dragon/DML

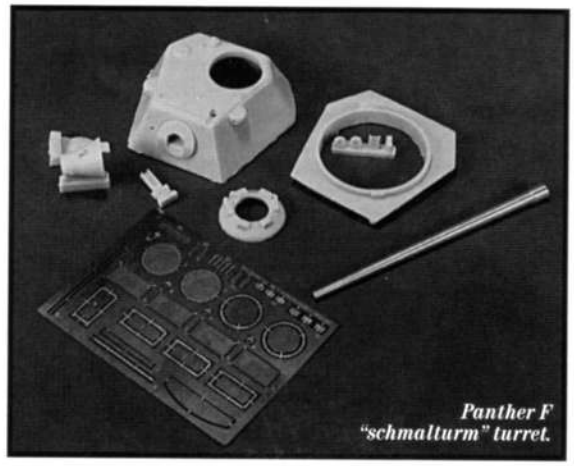
As many of you may already know, DML has split its product line into two entities; Dragon Hong Kong and Shanghai Dragon. The deal here is that Shanghai Dragon will be re releasing many of their older items under the new logo with new, lower prices. There will be no change in the way Dragon works, other than the fact that their product list is now shorter. According to what we have heard, Dragon will still get the lion's share of the new releases, although Shanghai Dragon will have some brand new items of its own.

The following Shanghai Dragon items are scheduled for release in the late summer and early fall. 6809, **Chinese Volunteer DSHK AA Team** (all new); 6078, **Gebirgsjäger w/donkeys** (the older set with a new figgy and a donkey); 6811, **M4A3E8 "Easy Eight;"** 3531, **U.S.M.C. M1A1 Abrams**; 9049, **Panzerbefehlswagen P204(f)** (previously listed as a Dragon item); 9045, **Panzer V ausf. G "Night Fighting Panther"** (the ex-Gunze kit with IR gear); 6072, **Schwerer Panzerspahwagen**; 6004, **SdKfz. 165 Hummel** and 3518, **ZSU-23-4M Air Defense Vehicle**.

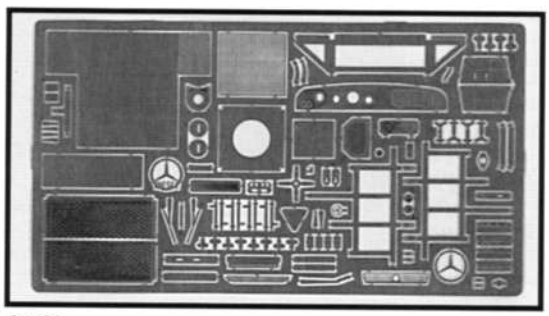
Prices on all these kits are TBA, but we've been told to expect a $19.95 retail on the full kits.

In comparison, not too much new from plain ol' Dragon. 9050 is a nifty permutation of the **Kübelwagen**. It's basically the previously souped-up version of the Hasegawa kit (with two figures), but this time they throw in the "Infantriekerren" trailer to boot. Keen-o! $21.98 retail.

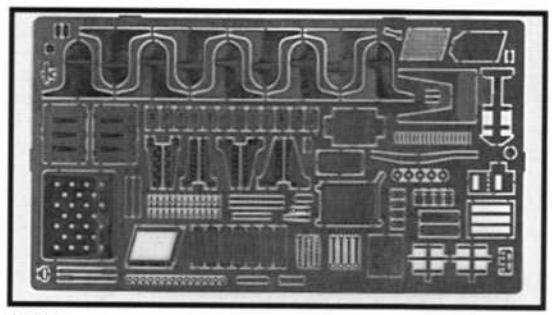
We have a little more information about two previously announced kits. The first is Dragon's 3825, **Railway Track w/embankment**. This will be tracks, wooden ties and an embankment section all molded separately. Four 11 3/4" inch (300mm) sections of track are included. The price is still TBA. Dragon 3530 is the UN BTR-70 w/ Ukrainian Peacekeepers. This is the old kit, but it will include four new figures for $29.98.



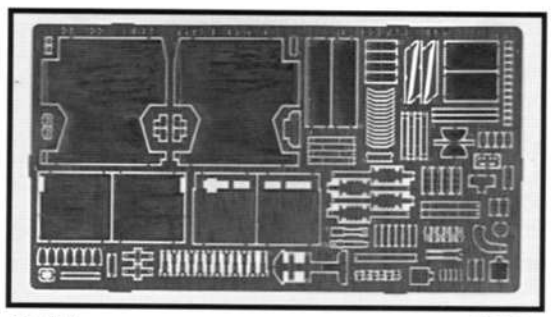
Panther F "schmalturm" turret.



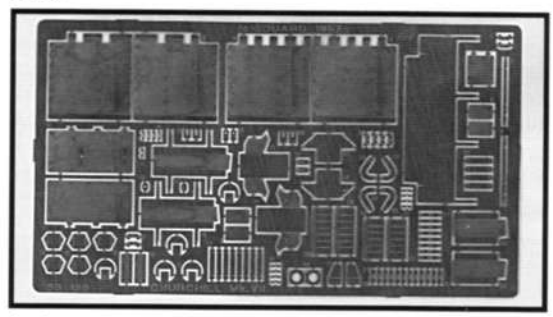
35-130



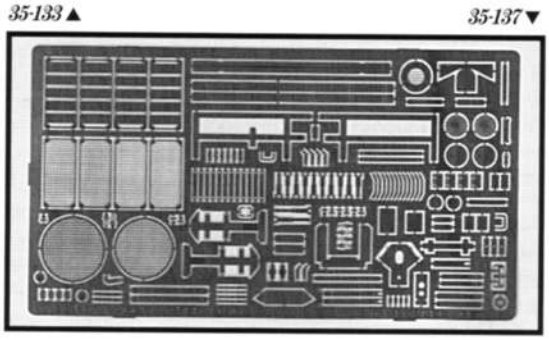
35-132



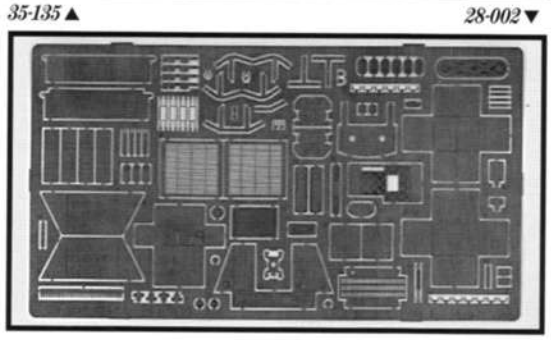
35-133 ▲



35-137 ▼



35-135 ▲



28-002 ▼

Gunze Sangyo

GS, once known for their high-tech kits, has steadily been kickin' some resin butt as of late. New stuff includes G-2004, **"So glad that y'all could drop in,"** which is a three figure vignette of a downed Luftwaffe pilot sharing a ciggy with two GIs. G-2003 is **"No where to hide"** another three figure scene featuring a captured Russian tanker being guided by two Germans. **"Run"** is the title of G-2022 and it depicts a Luftwaffe pilot trotting away from his downed aircraft. The vignette includes a section of the ME109G-10 from the nose to just aft of the cockpit and some of the wings.

These are all late summer releases and prices are TBA.

Gunze is represented in the U.S. by Marco Polo and can be found through most retail and mail order outlets.

HobbyTown USA

HobbyTown, the national hobby shop franchise, is sponsoring a big 'ol hobby contest in conjunction with the equally big 'ol RCHTA convention in Chicago. This all takes place on October 4th and 5th of this year. There will be ten categories and judging will be done by ballot. The grand prize will be a $500 HobbyTown USA shopping spree (wee!). Other significant goodies await the first place winners, too.

If you live in the Chi-town area or plan to visit, this will be even more reason to hang out at the Rosemont convention center. For more skat, contact Keith Lindsey at HobbyTown USA National Franchise Headquarters at 402-434-5050 or via e-mail at keith@hobbytown.com

Jaguar

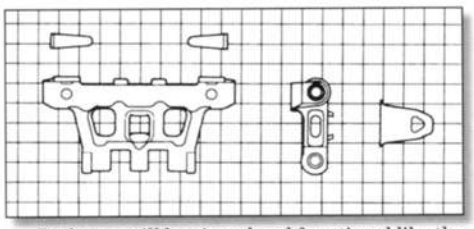
They just keep going and going... Quite a hunk of merchandise is inbound from the Jaguar boys. Take a look, August brings the following. 48003 will be a set of 1/35th scale **WWII Japanese Pilots** (gack!). $14.98. 63809 is **Russian Helmets with liners** for $4.98. Numero 63040 is a two figure set of an **Escaping Panzer Crew** for $20.98. 63039 is a **Wounded Panzer Crew** for $20.98. More resin pain in the form of a **Wounded German Officer**, number 63038 for $20.98. 63037 is a **Running MG Team** also for $20.98. **Friend or Foe** is the title of 63033; this two-figure set retails for $20.98. 63024 is another two figure set depicting **German engineers** for $20.98.

In the "other than figures" category, are three additional intriguing items. 63811 is a **Panzer IV Detail set**, while 63810 is a **Panzer III Detail set**. Both are $9.98. Item number 63518 is a **Panzer III interior** for the new Tamiya L kit. Neato.

Check for Jaguar and "Good Stuff" stuff at hobby shops everywhere.

ModelKasten

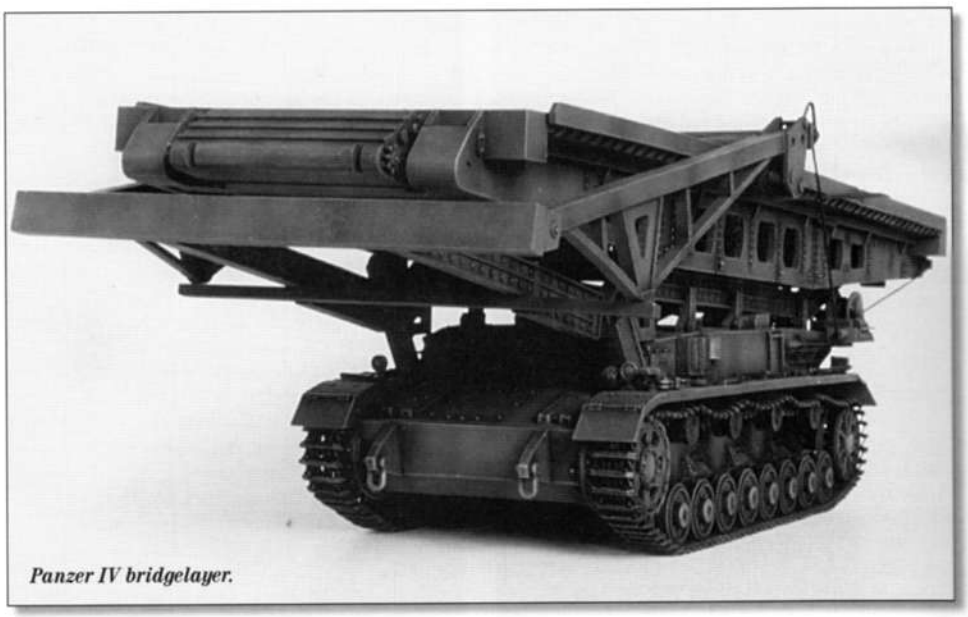
The latest from MK is SK-30, workable track for the **38(t) Czech tank**. A natural follow-up to their Hetzer stuff. SK-31 will be workable tracks for the **Japanese Type 97 "Chi-Ha"** series of tanks.



Both sets will be pinned and functional like the rest of the SK series.

A rather jewel-like detailing set for the new Tamiya Tiger is coming soon. This will feature the drum cupola with a gorgeous operating mechanism for the hatch. This is most likely the same piece found in MK's older set for the Tiger. It was and is a doozy. Item number A-8, price TBA.

Check your favorite MK retailer for pricing and availability.



Panzer IV bridgelayer.

Tamiya's new Tiger.

On Track Model Co.

We were just catching our breath from On Track's tasty K18, when wham! They go and release yet another cool kit. This time it's a **Panzer IV bridgelayer**. This is one wacky kit. It is complete with a totally new and scratch built Panzer IV D, which is way cool, considering one does not exist (until now). The model is quite ambitious, with all the various parts superbly molded in tan resin. The bridging structure is very elaborate and lovers of the complex are going to enjoy this one.

We are suitably impressed and we are hoping to see the D released as a separate kit (35003?). Look for Panzer IV bridgelayer through R&J Enterprises in the U.S. Overseas readers can check with On Track Models, P.O. Box 65050, Tesung Kwan Post Office, Kowloon, Hong Kong.

R&J Enterprises

More cool bits from our California friends. Three new resin products, the first of which is a set of **Panzer IV F/G side turret hatches**. These are detailed both inside and out and they retail for $8.00, stock number RJ35224.

Next is a complete set of **Tiger II/Jagdtiger cooling system resin modules**. This includes the radiator housings and the fans for each side. This is number RJ35227 and $9.00 takes the set home.

The third item is a set of **Panzer III escape hatches**, again detailed inside and out for $4.00, stock number RJ35233.

Rumor has it that if you are diligent and persistent, you'll find an R&J ad somewhere in this very magazine.

Tamiya America

Well, the big news from Tamiya is the announcement of their **GMC "deuce and a half" truck**. This will be the soft cab version and early reports out of Japan state that it will be a real humdinger. We hear Tamiya has done some tricky stuff with the suspension and drive train, simplifying the construction without sacrificing detail. It has a wooden cargo bed which is fairly common (check out that GMC book you have). With the Italeri metal job you now will be able to build almost any standard GMC. Look for this soon. Stock number 35218 will retail for $38.00. That new **Tiger** is out now. This is the early "Fieffel" version and it's fairly schnazzy. All the proper little details are present, like the dual Bosches, the full complement of grenade launchers, and a finely detailed Fieffel system. This latter item even includes the correct texturing on the hoses. All very Tamiyaish, it's stock number 35216 and it retails for $43.00

Ultracast

Who? Some new guys doin' that resin boogie. In this case they are doing figures and head sets. The headsets are **German Heads WWII #1** (35005), **German Heads WWII #2** (35006) and **British**

Heads WWII, Tank Crew 1944/45 (35007). Each set includes five heads and they sell for $9.95.

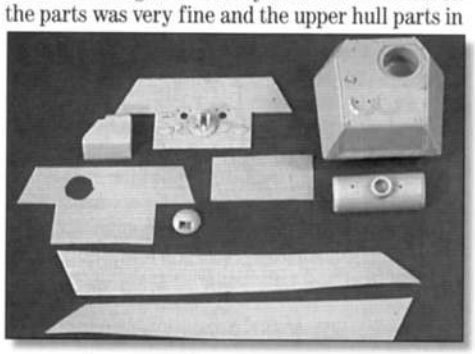
The figures include a **Luftwaffe Fighter Pilot, WWII** (35001); **German Infantry, Russia 1942** (35002); **Canadian Infantry #1, France 1944** (35003) and **Canadian Infantry #2, France 1944** (35004). The figures also retail for $9.95.

We have received samples of the head sets and we officially pronounce them not too shabby.

Look for more on Ultracast in a future Mini-Men. In the mean time contact them at P.O. Box 20005, Woodlawn Postal Outlet, Guelph, ONT N1H 6H6 Canada. E-mail: ucast@sentex.net

The VLS Corp

Some interesting items from the VLS boys. We've had a chance to get our grubby little hands on some of the stuff in advance and we bring you the following report. They're singin' the Panther song down Missouri way. A new **Panther Zimmerit** set leads the way. This is a ten piece set of resin parts to add the coating to the Tamiya kit. The Zimmerit on the parts was very fine and the upper hull parts in



our sample were so thin as to not require any sanding at all! In addition to the add-on panels, an entire coated turret, mantlet, kugelblende and rear hull are provided. The Panther Zimmerit set is item number 1259 and it retails for $16.95.

Following up this set is a **Panther detailing set** for the same kit. This includes a big ol' sheet of

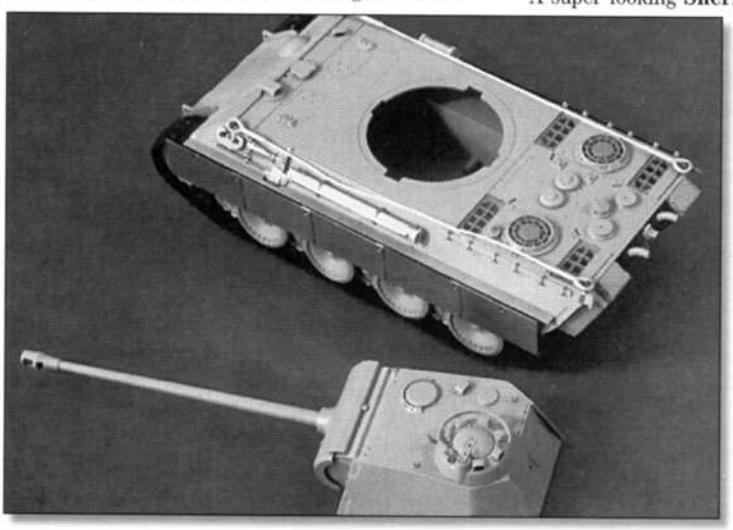
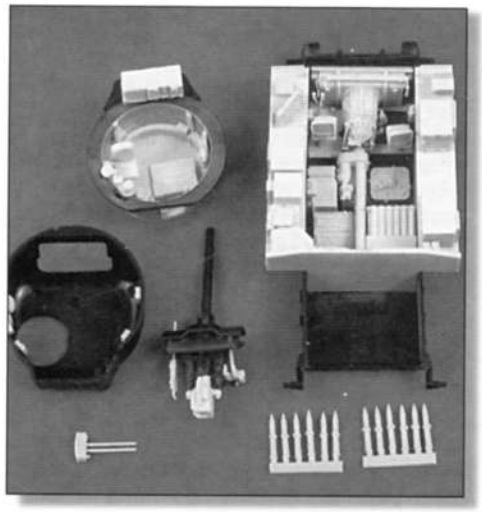


photo-etch, which is mostly taken up by the large skirt panels (with nice square holes). Other brass bits are included like the brackets for the panels and those significant tool brackets on the hull sides, among others. A proper selection of resin parts also is in the box and this includes some very spiff tools, like a jack, a fire extinguisher and a shovel head. One of our favorite parts was the gun cleaning rod tube. It's one piece and it'll save you the hassle of assembling that two-part jobby in the kit. One end also is open, revealing the internal compartment. The detailing set is number1266



and it retails for $26.95.

A **zimmerit set for the Tiger** (Tamiya) also is up and it is similar in composition to the Panther. This is number 1250 and it also retails for $16.95.

Under the heading "flat-stuff" are two smashing poster sets, one of **Nazi Propaganda Posters-WWII** (#1264) and **International Propaganda Posters-WWII**. These both are printed on high quality stock and the colors and registration are dead-on. They are larger than previous efforts and will be sure to last a while. Both are $6.95. Also very flat are two new etched templates for applying markings. They are number 1196, **U.S. Stars Template No. 1** and number 1236, **German WWII Crosses Template**. Both are 1/35th scale and the American template has four different size stars and rings, along with two different size "USA" markings. The German template is broken down into two different strips; one with open crosses, such as those seen in Poland, and one with outline crosses.

A super looking **Sherman Interior** is on the way. This is a good-sized set with about seventy-five parts in resin and a sheet of photo-etch material. All the parts are crisply rendered and their approach to the subject is interesting. They have included breech parts and a radio set so you don't have to rely on the Tamiya parts. The photo-etch fret is made up of only one part, which is the turret basket. Ten 75mm rounds and their clips also are thrown in, as are six canteens and two extra .30 cal barrels. The set is designed especially for the new Tamiya M4 and it is number 1244. Retail on this baby is $29.95.

Did you know that the Missouri Madmen are web wacky, too? Check out their pages at http://www.vls-vp.com. It's well organized and includes all the products they represent (such as this one).

VVS-Arsenal

We have recently been introduced to a new Ukrainian company called VVS-Arsenal. They produce a large line of 1/35th scale kits, composed mostly of Russian WWII subjects. To say these dudes are prolific is the understatement of the quarter. We have received several samples in the line and many already have disappeared into the hands of our building team (both with and without the editor's permission!). The kits are made up of resin, white metal and photo-etched parts—sometimes all of white metal in the case of the small artillery pieces.

The stuff is not bad at all. The subjects are very rare in many cases and the detail and execution are not at all what we have come to expect (this is a good thing). We especially liked the fact that the materials used always seem suited to the task, such as photo-etched screen for the T-50 kit and white metal road wheels, too. The packaging is a bit on the crude side, with what looks like hand-made boxes. But each does contain a clean drawing of the subject on the top and the instructions are O.K.

So take a peek at the list (we've run it in its entirety). No retail prices are yet available, but we suspect they will be reasonable. 35-501, **Russian Artillery Crew Set No #1** (3 Figures); 35-502, **Russian Artillery Crew Set No #2** (3 Figures); 35-503, **Russian Artillery Crew Set No #3** (3 Figures); 35-511, **Russian Naval Inf. w/Heavy MG** (3 Figures); 35-512, **Russian Naval Infantry** (4 Figures); 35-519, **Russian Tank Commander 40's** (1 Figure); 35-520, **Russian Tank Commander 80's** (1 Figure); 35-601, **Russian M.32 45mm At Gun**; 35-602, **Russian M.37 45mm At Gun**; 35-603, **Russian M.42 45mm At Gun**; 35-604, **Russian 76mm Light Regimental Gun**; 35-605, **Polish Bofors 37mm Wz.36 AT Gun**; 35-606, **German Ig-18 75mm Light Inf. Howitzer**; 35-607, **Russian 14.5mm AA-Gun ZPU-1**; 35-701, **Russian ZIS-2 57mm AT Gun**; 35-702, **Russian 132mm Heavy Mortar**; 35-801 **Russian BS-3 100mm At Gun**; 35-802, **Russian 122mm Model 31' Field Howitzer**; 35-803, **Russian 152mm Model 43' D1 Field Howitzer**; 35-901, **Russian Aerosleigh GAZ-Rf-98** (2 Man); 35-902, **Russian Aerosleigh Nkl-26** (1 Man); 35-1004, **Russian Artillery Tractor T-20**; 35-1005, **German 37mm Sp Art. Schlepper 630(r)**; 35-1006, **Finnish T-20 Artillery Tractor**; 35-1101, **Russian Light Armored Car BA-64** (Early); 35-1102, **Russian Light Armored Car BA-64** (Late); 35-1103, **Russian Medium Armored Car BA-"I"**; 35-1104, **Russian Medium Armored Car BA-1**; 35-1105, **Russian Medium Armored Car BA-3**; 35-1106, **Russian Medium Armored Car BA-6**; 35-1107, **Russian Medium Armored Car BA-9**; 35-1108, **Russian Medium Armored Car BA-10**; 35-1109, **Russian Medium Armored Car BA-10k**;

35-1201, **Russian T-26 Model 31'** (2 Turrets); 35-1202, **Russian T-26tu Model 31'** (2 Turrets); 35-1203, **Russian DT-26 Model 32'** (Flame-Tank); 35-1204, **Russian T-26 Model 33'**; 35-1205, **Russian DT-126/130 Model 33'**; 35-1206, **Russian Artillery T-26-4 (A) Model 33'**; 35-1207, **Russian T-26 Model 37'**; 35-1208, **Russian Light Sp Gun ZIS-30 45mm AT Gun**; 35-1209, **Russian DT-133 Flame Tank**; 35-1210, **Russian Light Tank T-30**; 35-1211, **Russian Amphibious Light Tank T-40**; 35-1213, **Russian Light Tank BT-2** (Early); 35-1214, **Russian Light Tank BT-2** (Late); 35-1215, **Russian Light Tank BT-3** and 35-1216, **Russian Light Tank BT-4** (2 Turrets).

For more information, contact Mike Dunlop, 2207 Kuykendall Circle, Bryan, TX 77808. Mike does not represent the line as yet, but he is acting as the U.S. liaison to the manufacturer. We will bring you more information on VVS as it comes to light.

Yanks

Yanks has a few new things up this time around. Some of the latest are 9622, **U.S. Jeep driver**; 9624, **U.S. Tanker seated/drinking** and 9625, **Russian shot while advancing**. These are out now.

Also newish are 9631, **U.S. Dodge Ambulance Driver** (for the Italeri kit); **U.S. Red Ball Express 2 1/2t crew** (2 black GIs); a **U.S. M-5/M-8 Drivers Com-partment** (for Tamiya); 9702, **U.S. Tank Riders** (set of 5); 9703, **Japanese Anti-Tank Concrete Pillbox** (limited release of 200) and 9704, **Pacific Beach Log Retaining Wall** (also limited).

For more specific pricing and availability information contact your local retailer or YANKS direct (they have a nifty little newsletter) at YANKS Miniatures, 3731 Schumann Drive, Omaha, NE 68123. Phone: 402-292-DDAY. E-mail: yanks usa@aol.com

Book Reviews

DUKW in Action
Armor Number 35
By Timothy J. Kutta
Squadron Signal Publications, 1996
48 pages, B&W with color center section
$7.95

THIS IS A DUKW lover's book and follows the Squadron series pattern with lots of photos and a pinch of text. Most of the photos are new to us and some are down right neato. The color plates in the center are above average (DUKW lover's remember) and provide some great schemes for anybody who wants to build one. That is good.

There is a brief development history described and two sections dealing with the wartime introduction in Europe and the Pacific. Technical data is included, but not much, and there is a simple line drawing and several oblique view drawings used to illustrate some details. The photos show the vehicle up close a bit, but most show the DUKW in use in training or in combat settings. Good stuff mostly.

Picture quality is above average with clear views but Kutta does not seem to have the modeler in mind, nor the historian either, when it comes to the photo captions. They are correct as written but most are not very informative. We came away wondering which unit's DUKWs we were looking at when the photo was taken, or even where it was taken. Since most of the photos are from Army sources this is a surprising slip-up. "The DUKW could quickly move men and material across lakes and rivers, as well as dry land," is typical of the generic nature of the captions.

However this is a must have book if you ever intend to build an amphibious GMC truck of the DUKW kind. The basic vehicle is well illustrated as are some of the modified versions. If you could get a 1/35th P-38 Lightning there is a great diorama idea, and the underside photo alone shows why you cannot use a standard banjo or split-axle GMC kit to cannibalize the suspension in a model. DUKW in Action also briefly covers foreign service use and even a few civil postwar vehicles. Recommended of course and a good one to read in the bathtub!

Commanding the Red Army's Sherman Tanks
The World War II Memoirs of Hero of the Soviet Union Dmitriy Loza
Translated and Edited by James F. Gebhardt
University of Nebraska Press, 1996
173 pages, hard cover with dust jacket, center B&W photo section
$25.00 (approximately)

Commanding the Red Army's Sherman Tanks
The WORLD WAR II MEMOIRS of HERO of the SOVIET UNION DMITRIY LOZA
JAMES F. GEBHARDT

THERE HAVE BEEN A LOT OF books that trash the Sherman tank but this one is a refreshing tome written by the commander of a Russian M4A2 unit who fought both the Germans and the Japanese in Shermans. It is translated by a former U.S. Army officer from a Russian text delivered by the author to the American Embassy in hopes that the "true" story of the "Emcha" (the Russian nickname for the A2 diesel Sherman) in Soviet use in WWII would not remain lost.

In the opening notes the author states his desire to tell the world about the amazing tanks that came over the sea and in which he proudly served. He recognizes the sanitized Soviet histories that do not mention the support provided to his country, the ones that only show T-34s and KVs winning the Great Patriotic War. He wanted to tell anyone who would read it that the Shermans he had were excellent tanks, that they had attributes that were not found in Soviet tanks or even the great German tanks, and that he and his troops fought well in them and did amazing things with them. He expresses his love of the Yankee beast that got him safely through the advance into the heartland of Germany and also carried him over the trackless ground of Manchuria to face the Japanese.

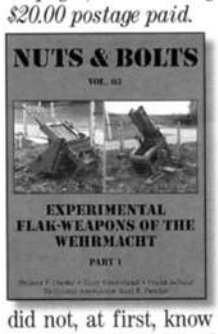
Reading it, we learned much about the good points of the M4A2 (and hence most types of Shermans). How it could cross terrain that no other tank type would cross, how you could shut off half the engine (the diesel had twin banks) and quietly bypass the German outposts to hit the defenders in the side, and even how to kill the vaunted Tiger with two M4A2s (one shoots the track and when the Tiger swerves, the other delivers a round to the gas tank). We also learned some Sherman trivia, such as how long it took to clean up a new tank covered with the waterproofed tarpaper seals, how the "Emchisti" (M4A2 crews) at first used barbed wire to make improvised grousers to improve winter traction, how the people who unloaded the ships sent presents of vodka and other goodies hidden somewhere in the tank, what part of the Sherman was removed and given to Russian tank units to improve their fighting ability, and even what happens when a Japanese pilot kamikazes into the side of a Sherman. There is detail in this book not found anywhere else.

The description of battles is more on the personal level and not meant to be a battle history. The author does describe the tactics used against the Germans, for example how movement at night or in bad weather to positions close to the enemy helped neutralize the German superiority in technology, and how the Sherman, and only the Sherman, with its Motown automotive skills made the exploitation of tank proof terrain and breakthroughs possible. The description of the taking of the center of Vienna in 1945 by his unit of Emchas is fascinating and includes a vignette in which a SU-122 attached to his command blows away a Panther in the street at short range using a concrete piercing round (his advice—don't stand behind the SU!).

The text is mostly anecdotes, with the only citations coming from the editor/translator but it rings true. It includes a small number of photos with a few of these new and a few old, but one is most interesting because it shows the rare M4A2E8 76mm tank crossing a stream with a very Russian stowage load and only made us want to see more (the author does mention the delivery of some new tanks in January of 1945).

Unlike the many Anglo books that whine about the Sherman's shortcomings, this book praises it's best points. And in so doing it tells the story of those thousands of pieces of American equipment sent to Russia that helped kick the Germans out, the ones that have not been given a story until now. The author has gone to some length to speak fondly of his beloved American-made Emcha. And we Americans who have read it loved his book.

Nuts & Bolts
Vol. 3
Experimental Flak-Weapons of the Wehrmacht Part 1
by Heiner F. Duske, Tony Greenland, Frank Schulz
42 pages, B&W throughout.
$20.00 postage paid.



A BIT OF NEWS IN THE LATEST installment of the series. The authors went and discovered four previously unknown weapons developed by the Germans during WWII. We're always up for that!

The weapons are located in a museum in Moscow and the authors did not, at first, know what they had discovered. With the help of John L. Rue and German weapons expert Karl R. Pawlas (contributor to Waffen Revue) they were able to begin piecing together the story of these strange guns. They are pretty weird looking items, with multi-barrel mounts and highly unique platforms, when compared to other German artillery we've seen.

Mr. Pawlas has written a very interesting section about the discovery and research of what they have dubbed Salenmaschinenkanone (SMK) and it makes for fascinating reading. Mr. Rue adds a

concise set of 1/35th scale drawings of the first of the four weapons. As more research is completed it will be published in Part 2.

Definitely the most interesting of the series to date. German armor fans will kick get a huge kick out of it. The introduction states that New Connection of Germany will be kitting at least two of the guns in 1997 and 1998. Thanks guys.

Armor in Profile 1
by James Grandsen
Pelta Publishing, 1997
32 pages, soft cover, B&W and color.
$10.00 (approximately)

THIS IS THE FIRST IN A SERIES from Pelta which looks very promising indeed. Number 1 covers the British Valentine Mk III, the Russian 10TP Cruiser Tank, the SMK Russian Heavy Tank, the Hungarian Turan 40M tank and the French S-35 Somua (one of the photos even shows a Somua in German service with Zimmerit). When we say "cover" we mean it. The publisher has quite cleverly shoe-horned into these 32 pages action photos, color plates, line drawings and both Polish and English text. Wow! This includes a super sized cutaway of each (across both pages), with the appropriate keyed captions, again in both English and Polish.

All the photos and illustrations are crisp and clean and the printing is first rate. If this is what we can expect in subsequent volumes, we can hardly wait. A big thumbs up.

The Panzerkampfwagen III at War
Armor at War Series 7010
by Michael Jerchel & Waldemar Trojca
Concord Publications, 1997
72 pages, soft cover, B&W with color covers and center section.
$17.95

IN THE EVER PRESENT QUEST for fresh material on German armor, Concord has fired another round in the direction of the modeler with this title on the Panzer III. Drawing on material from Eastern Europe, the authors manage to tell the story in a fairly bright way. We liked the new photos of the very early versions of the tank (A-D). These are generally rare and although some were grainy, they were appreciated none the less. There is also a good selection of shots of the E, F, and Gs, which is also very welcome. Most of the published reference tends towards the later models. The color plates touch on a good cross-section of vehicles with French, Finnish and North African tanks represented.

One of the weirder photos shows a Bergepanzer III with an improvised gun mounted behind an armored plate. Wacky.

Some coverage of the Sturmgeschütz is included, which seemed odd to us as it's only a few pages. We would rather have seen these pages devoted to the Panzer III and perhaps seen the StuG as a separate subject. No biggie, German armor fans still will want this one for their collection and the price can't be beat with the series always at under twenty bucks.

Stalin's Heavy Tanks 1941-1945
The KV and IS Heavy Tanks
Armor at War Series 7012
by Steven J. Zaloga, Jim Kinnear, Andrey Aksenov & Aleksandr Koshchavtsev
Concord Publications, 1997
72 pages, soft cover, B&W with color covers and center section.
$17.95

IT TOOK FOUR GUYS TO write this book? Well, it was worth it. This is about the best of the Concord titles to come along so far. Perhaps the umpteenth title on the subject by Zaloga, it encompasses all the wartime Soviet heavies from the KV right through the Stalin series. Post war stuff gets covered, too, with a handful of excellent shots of the IS-3 and a few of the IS-4, some even showing the IS-3 in nasty after action poses in Hungary circa 1956 (ouch!).

A lot of what you'll see here has been published before, but it is supplemented with great new stuff and this is the first time we have seen all of it in one place, which is a major, major bonus. We were especially pleased about the coverage of the SU-152 and the other assault guns. Another plus is the size of the photos, which in most cases is BIG. Some of the common shots are supplemented with other photos from the same roll, which makes for interesting comparisons.

Lovers of Soviet wartime armor are directed to scarf this one up ASAP. One of the year's better reference values.

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Positively Pleasing Panzer

Tamiya follows up with a turreted version of its Panzer III chassis!

All photos by Bob Oehler

From 1995 to the present, there have been a plethora of Panzer III variants on the market. Yet, despite the number of choices, Tamiya's most recent release, the Panzer III Ausf L still comes as a very welcome addition to the group. What is even more cool about this kit is the possibility of conversion options. For example, if you choose to go spaz, you could convert the L to a late J by adding an extra klap to the mantlet and a couple of armored vision ports to the turret, a few minor little details and... viola! A Panzer III J.

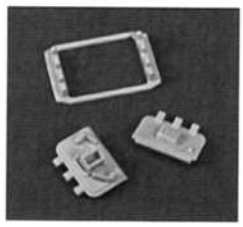
First Love

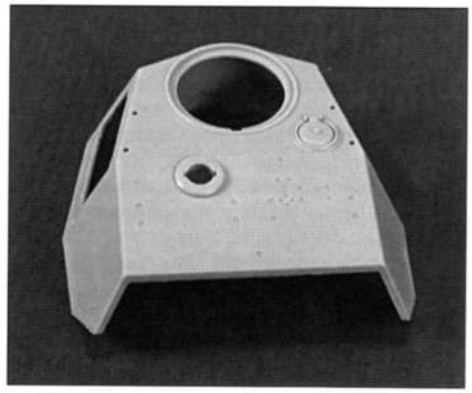
My first impression of the model reveals many of the same qualitative attributes as its cousin on the same chassis, the Sturmgeschütz Ausf G. Other than the portions of the kit that are common to the StuG, this is a completely new kit with original tooling. As we have come to expect from Tamiya, the tooling is precise and accurate throughout, leaving very little for the modeler to re-create or correct.

The lower hull features the proper fittings with delicate cast texture where appropriate. This of course includes: torsion arms, final drives, drive sprockets and shock absorber bases. The wheels are extremely well tooled and even include the six welds along the inside rim.

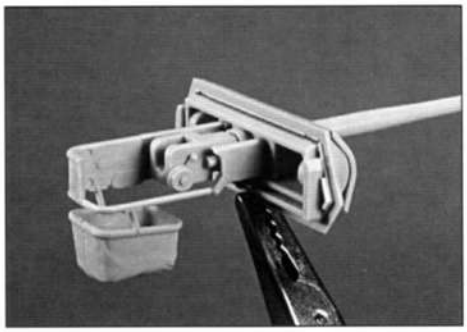
As indicated by the instruction sheet, I started construction on the lower hull with the torsion arms. Locator pins molded on the sides of the hull ensure that all arms are properly aligned. These, of course, can be removed if the modeler chooses to articulate the suspension. The front towing points located in front of the final drive housings are not a tight fit when installed and will require some filling. Once this is done the nifty little access hatches located between the first and second return roller can be added. This is followed by the rear plate, exhaust baffles and guard. The next step is the construction of the wheels, idler wheels and drive sprockets. Unfortunately, Tamiya has done away with those keen little poly caps on all road wheels but has left them on the drive sprockets (I really miss the poly caps because they make painting the road wheels soooo much easier! Bring 'em back fellas? Will ya? Pleeeaaase!).

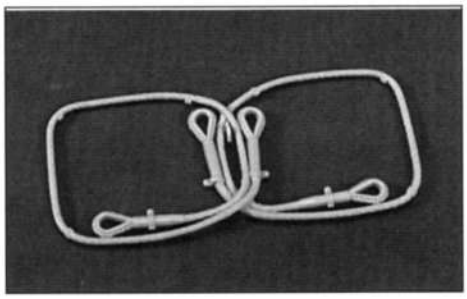
With the lower hull components assembled, the smaller external fittings on the upper hull can be completed. Both the engine and transmission hatches are molded separately allowing those who are so inclined to entertain scratchbuilding the interior features. For the purposes of this article (and the given time frame) I chose to glue the hatches closed. Special note: due to their prominence on the rear and front deck, care should be taken to ensure that an even gap is left all around each hatch. In addition, one should be cautious when attaching the port and starboard sides (items D12 & D13) so that they are properly aligned. The next and final hull operations consist of the

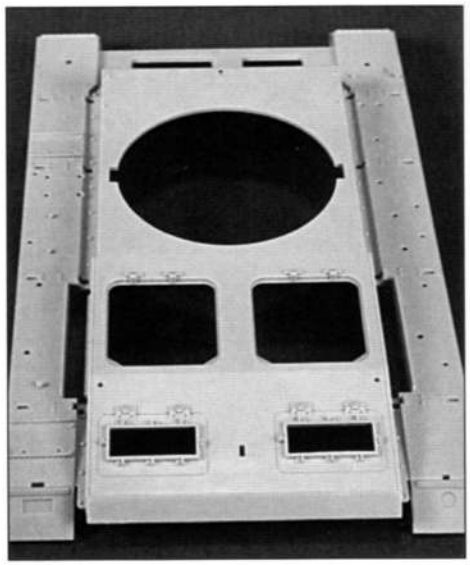


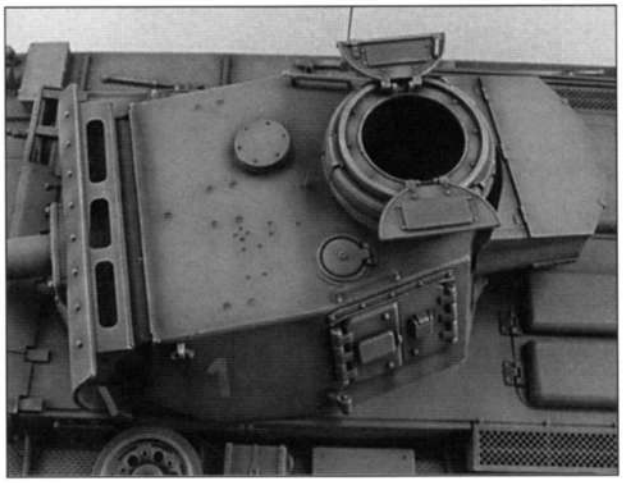


Right: the naked turret. Left: the side hatch insert and the detailed side hatches.

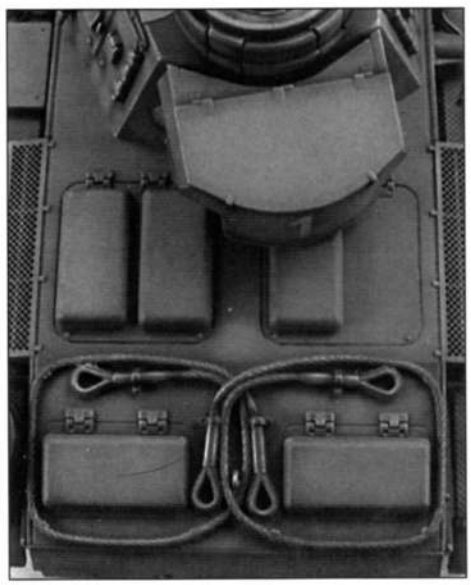








Top left: the main gun is detailed on the back. This is visible through the side hatches. Top center: the impressive one-piece tow cable. Top right: the bare hull is similar to the StuG kit in that the larger back engine access hatches are removable. Middle left: the commander figure provided in the kit. Middle center: the finished turret. Below left: another view of the turret. Below: the finished back deck. I was skeptical about the cable, but it looks pretty good.



additional frontal spaced armor with associated support brackets, lights, antenna with case (simulated wood grain, ooh-ahhh!!) and all of the OVM. At this point both the lower and upper portions of the hull can be assembled.

One of the features of this kit that is worthy of additional hoopla is the minute number of knock-out marks. The kit is extremely well engineered and the fit was darn near perfect and there were zero sink holes.

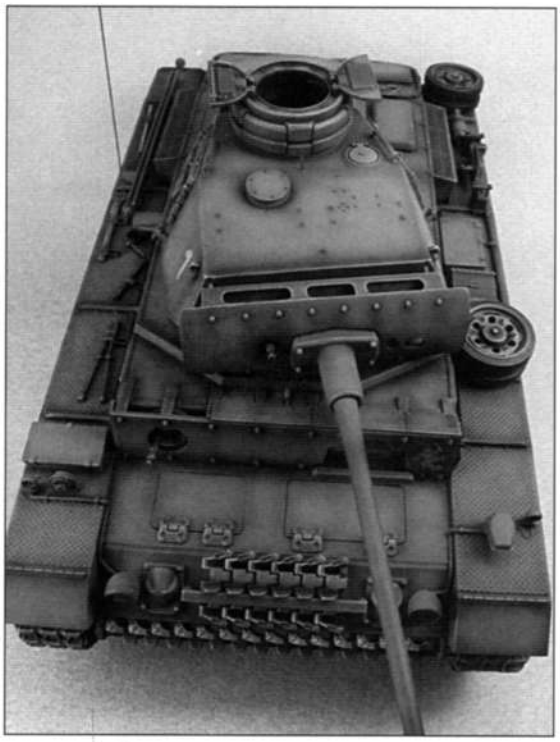
The turret consists of an upper shell, lower base, gun mount, 5cm KwK L60 gun, mantlet with choice of mount alone or mount plus spaced armor, three part commander's cupola, turret storage box and armored crew access doors. Once again, all parts are superbly molded and very well engineered. Once again, Tamiya has put enough gun in the turret to form a solid basis for detailing, if so inclined.

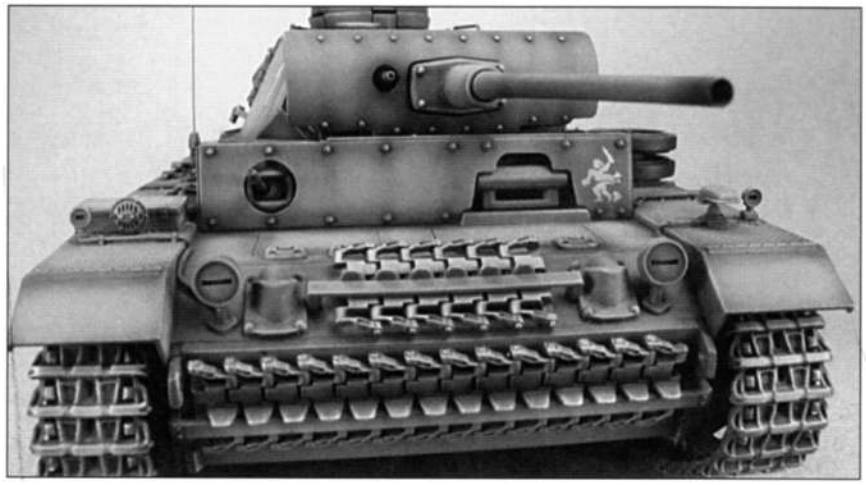
While the turret construction is straightforward and quick, there are several little areas that require care and just a little finesse. The two areas that require some additional attention are the hatch hinge mounting plates (part C17) and the centering of the gun assembly/mantlet with the opening in the gun recoil tube housing (parts C1, C2, C4). The first is barely worth mentioning. However, if not properly aligned, a gap will show rather than a clean joint. The second is a bit more difficult. When checked against my references, the opening on the gun recoil tube opening is larger than it should be. As a result, it is difficult to complete step 15 in the instructions without the gun protruding at an awkward angle. Most of this can be avoided by test fitting all parts and ensuring that they are properly seated during actual assembly.

Because Tamiya did such a wonderful job on this kit I just couldn't pass up the opportunity to add just a few minor details. The two most obvious additions are the electrical conduit for the lights and the two small pieces of wood mounted on the rear of the turret storage box. These wood strips were critical due to the fact that when the turret was traversing and the antenna touched the metal of the turret storage box the radio ceased to operate effectively. Finally, I added the screens from Tamiya's photo-etched set for the StuG G.

Panzer colors

Although many Panzer IIIs sported a variety of colorful camouflage schemes, I felt it equally interesting to paint the vehicle dark gray. My rendition of this vehicle began with a base mixture of four parts Tamiya German Gray to one part Tamiya black, plus one part Tamiya Field Blue. Once applied to the vehicle, I followed with an over spray of the same mixture without the black. Finally,





More snapshots. I added the cables for the front headlights. Check out the spaced armor on the front glacis.

I added one part Tamiya Buff to the intermediate highlight to simulate dust as well as the bleaching effect of sun and rain. The lower hull was highlighted once again with a 50/50 mixture of Buff and Flat Earth to suggest the staining of mud and to simulate road dust.

Next, I washed the entire model with black Windsor and Newton oil paint heavily thinned with Turpenoid to pick out the recessed features. Once the Turpenoid evaporated, I drybrushed the entire model using a warm gray mixture of oils. After drying for a period of twenty-four hours the model was sprayed with Testors Dull-Cote.

After several hours of drying time the markings can now be applied. A while back I found an obscure reference that indicated that several Ausf L vehicles were delivered to the 11th Panzer Division in the original German Gray scheme. I then decided that I would use several of the nifty Stencilit sets for the division marking, as well as the balkanreuz. The numerical markings were decals from the Tamiya German Decal Sheet C.

The tracks are molded in vinyl and are a good representation of the middle version Panzer III/IV tracks, with one exception. Due to the limitations of molding vinyl, it was impossible for Tamiya to create accurate middle model track with open guide horns (Friulmodellismo makes an excellent after market set of tracks, as does ModelKasten). Anyway, these were painted with Tamiya Red Brown to represent rusted areas and a dry brush mixture of white oil paint and S&J Spray Metal Powder (Aluminum) to highlight the worn metal areas.

One of the more pleasing features of this kit is the finely sculpted commander figure. It is a welcomed addition to see a relaxed pose, considering the more usual stiffly rendered action poses released by several after market companies.

Uber Alles, Meine Kampfwagen Ganz Gut Ist!!

Overall, the kit is an outstanding addition to the Tamiya family of German armor. It was well molded and engineered and I'm sure it will prove very popular with the German armor fans. Finally, considering Tamiya's recent trend toward lower prices, in addition to their high quality, I feel this kit is definitely worth the Deutsche marks!

—Robert Oehler

MMiR RECCE

Tamiya Panzer III L. Kit number 35215. Kit graciously provided by the manufacturer. Suggested retail $37.50.

References

Books abound on the III. These are a few of my favs.

Achtung Panzer No. 2 Panzerkampfwagen III, Dai Nippon Kaiga, 1991. O.K., O.K. You've heard it before, but it bears repeating: this book is rad. Drawings, photos, it's all in here. About thirty bucks.

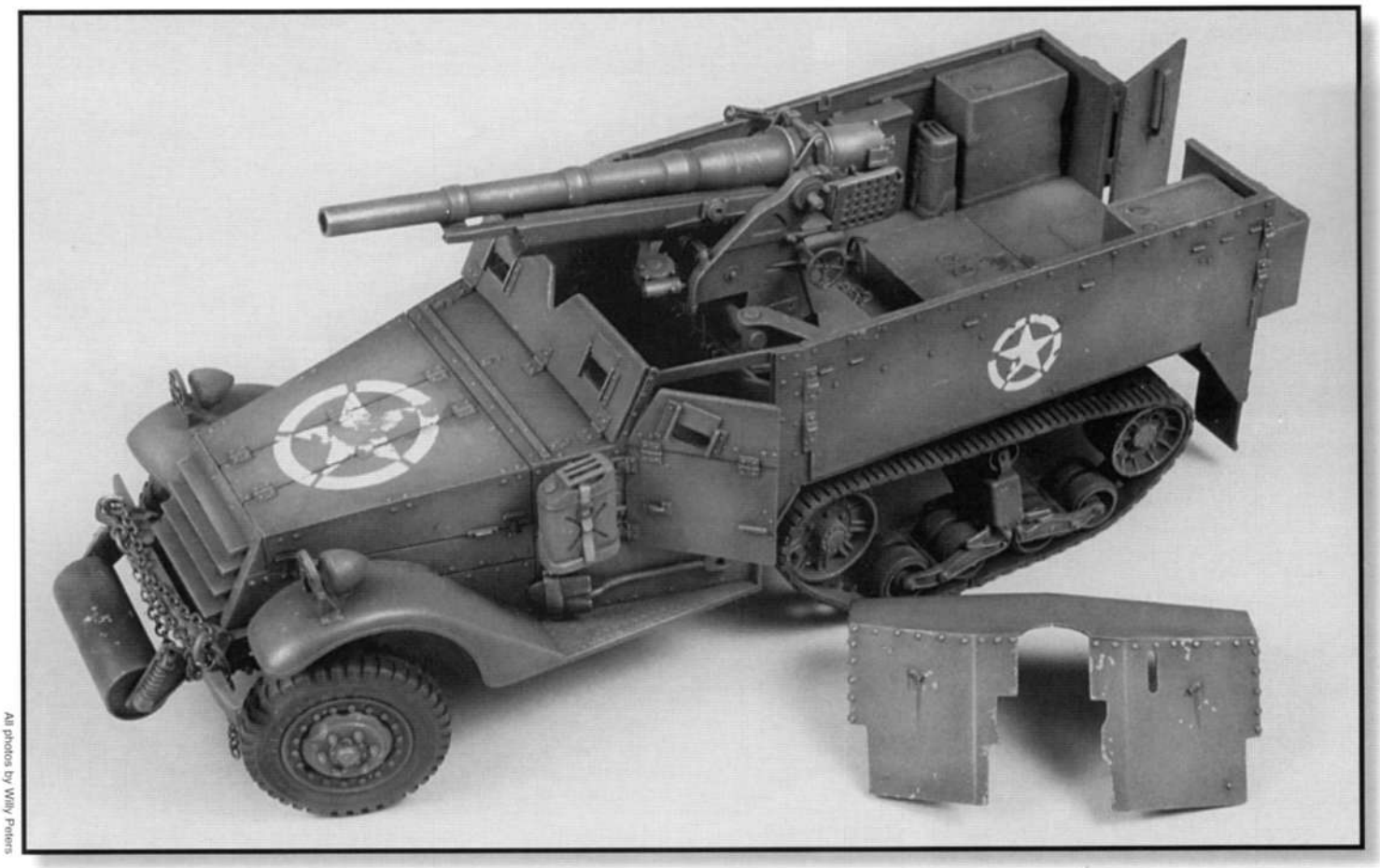
Panzer III & Its Variants, by Walter J. Spielberger, Schiffer Publishing, 1993. The English version of the classic title. A little bit on each of the variants.

Ground Power No. 002, 1994, 7. W.W.II German PzKpfw III. All photos and some Japanese text. Especially thorough on those of the J-ish and L-ish persuasion. Cool color plates.

PzKpfw III in action, Armor Number 24, Squadron Signal Publications, 1988. Pretty good for its size. A nice representation of photos covering the whole family. The standard section of color profile includes both a J and an L.

KMC and the GMC

Now we're talkin', a sound Allied subject for a sound older kit



All photos by Willy Peters

This wonderful new conversion set for the old Tamiya M21 Mortar Carrier is a real stunner and will cause the white metal Mole Miniatures kit to hit the door for the swap-meets. It builds into the half-track M3 GMC (Gun Motor Carriage, not General Motors Corp, for you who are not washed).

The M3 GMC was a semi-successful attempt by the U.S. to arm the M3 half-track with a proper gun and give it a role as a mobile tank destroyer and all around support weapon. The American derivative of the old French 75mm is the basis for the conversion and vehicles of this type served in the Tunisian Campaign with US Army units, in the Pacific with the Marines mostly, and in the Sicily/Italy fight with a few Commonwealth units. It met with mixed results in part because it was a lightly armored vehicle and was replaced with more robust mounts later in the war, but proved useful nonetheless especially in the southwest Pacific. The semi-exposed crew space was protected at the front with a large gun shield (at least two versions known) and so it was at best a quick solution to adding firepower to the battlefield.

KMC and the GMC

KMC has mastered the parts in resin and a fret of photo-etched brass and all you have to supply is the M21 kit (Tamiya #35083) and a few bits of rod and/or wire. KMC has provided most of the parts (about 45 resin and 20-plus photo-etched) for the conversion but resisted the urge to include fixes for the Tamiya half-track, since that would have driven the price up a lot. The Tamiya one-slash-two-track is well known for its weakly rendered drive sprocket and idler, and the stiff and unconvincing tracks. The former problem could be fixed by using one of the after market sets (Show Modelling and Eduard are examples) but you have to live with the tracks.

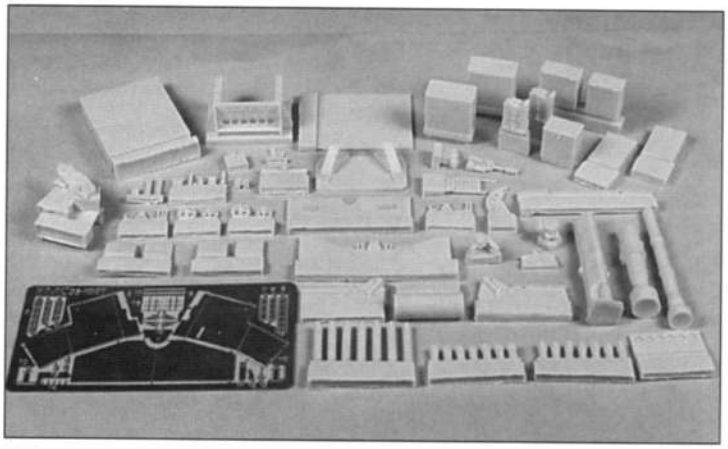
In spite of the Tamiya kit's weakness, the KMC conversion makes such an improvement that I opted to just build the bottom of the half-track as Tamiya intended. The reason the M21 kit is used for this conversion is that the M3 infantry hauler kit has molded on side detail that would have to be removed, and the M16 AA gun track has drop sides and no rear door detail. The M21 works as the easiest to convert.

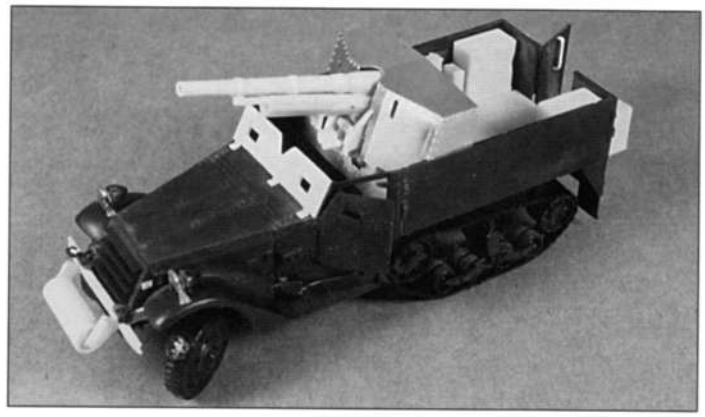
Tamiya's first kit step is followed with the caution of leaving the winch supports (C17) off, since the GMC used a roller on the front. At the front of the frame, KMC includes a new resin bumper and the roller and roller supports, there being no problems with this change. KMC tells you what to putty and sand at the radiator grill, tells you which parts from the M21 to leave off, and provides a drawing showing several sand-and-cut changes to the rear hull plate. Cool.

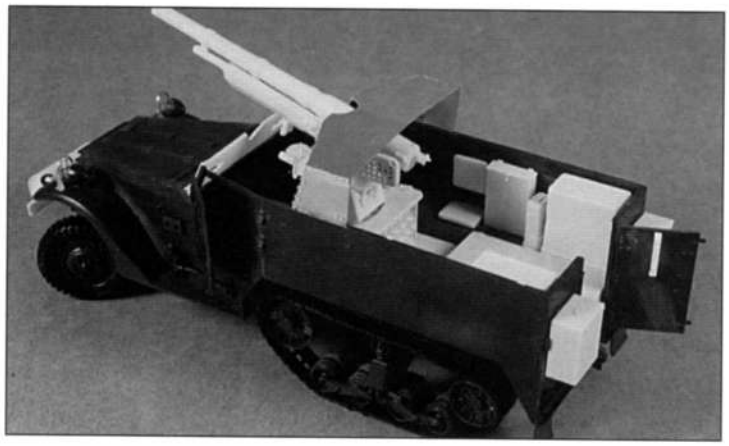
A word about tires. Many of the M3 GMCs had slanted pattern all terrain tread tires on the front wheels. I am told that KMC will probably release these as an optional set in the near future, assuming sales of the 75mm conversion do well enough to support that effort.

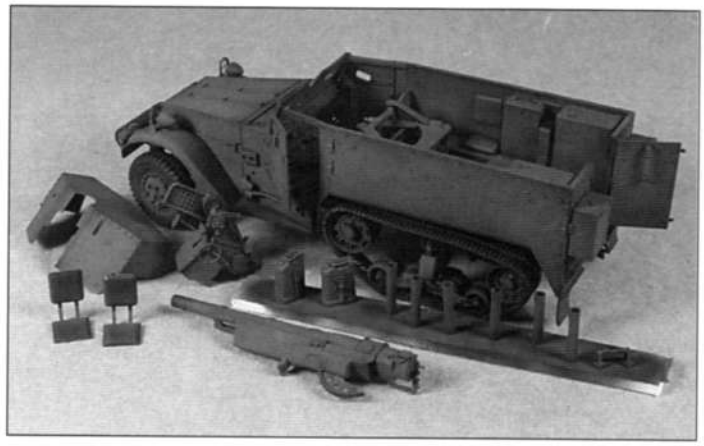
The suspension and rear track system follows Tamiya's intended route and the next required change is in the hull floor. Instead of giving you an expensive whole floor replacement, the Tamiya floor must be modified. The platform below the gun cradle is installed after cutting out a good bit of the forward floor area (Dremel followed by a file job), and a section of the floor's rear rail must be cut off to provide room for the new KMC floor. That's about all the real modifications needed to the styrene parts. Not too hard to do either, unless you are not good with tools.

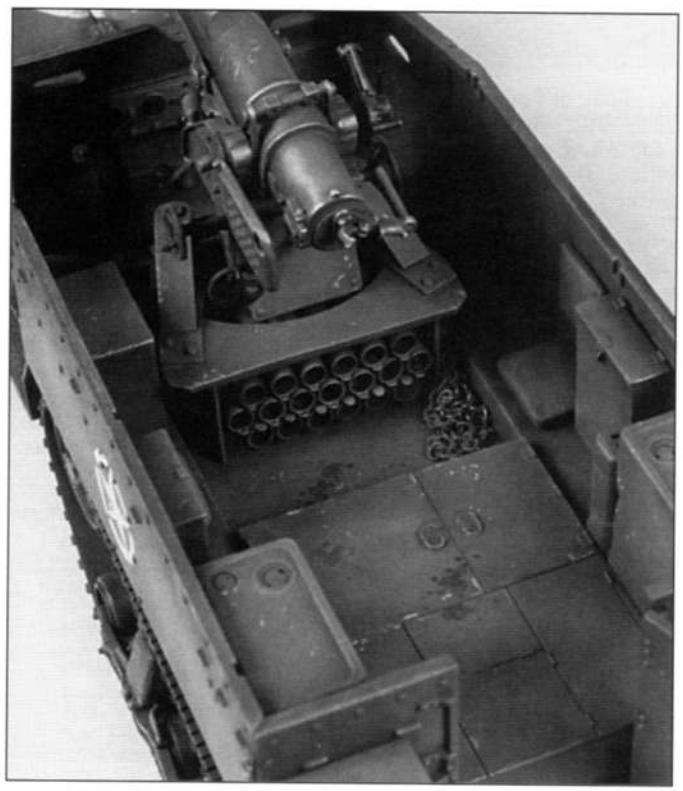
The hull sides need a few of the molded on bits lopped off before the box goes together. The front gets a new resin part with some gun lock detail molded on that faces forward. The cab and engine hood is all Tamiya goods, except for the windshield armor plate, which KMC includes. They even provide PE hinge details. The PE fret has 4 little parts for each side that make up into the headlight guards and











Top left: all the parts laid out. I haven't removed any of the overpours at this stage. All the parts were molded beautifully. Top right and above left: all the various parts on the model. The conversion kit is not very complex after all. Above right: the finished vehicle just prior to painting. I like to attach the smaller parts to a board with double stick tape. Below left: the finished fighting compartment.

these are no more tricky to work with than most. They look much better than the styrene guards, so the hassle of gluing small metal is worth it (it seems my arms are getting shorter as I get older).

Before moving onto the gun, there are a number of external styrene kit parts to add; the battery box, ax, and GI water cans for example. KMC provides the rear stowage boxes in resin. Inside the rear, they give the gas tanks (one of which has realistic dents in it), two more GI cans, gun crew seats, and several internal stowage boxes that mount on the side walls. Locations are easy to figure out, except note that the front-most one has to be spaced properly, so don't abuse the instructions by saying KMC didn't warn of this.

Having gotten this far, I had most of a complete half-track and that was a good time to paint it. Getting into the nooks would be harder if the gun mount was installed first. The only color instructions in KMC's notes are for the crew seats so the rest gets the overall OD treatment.

Seventy-five of those millimeters

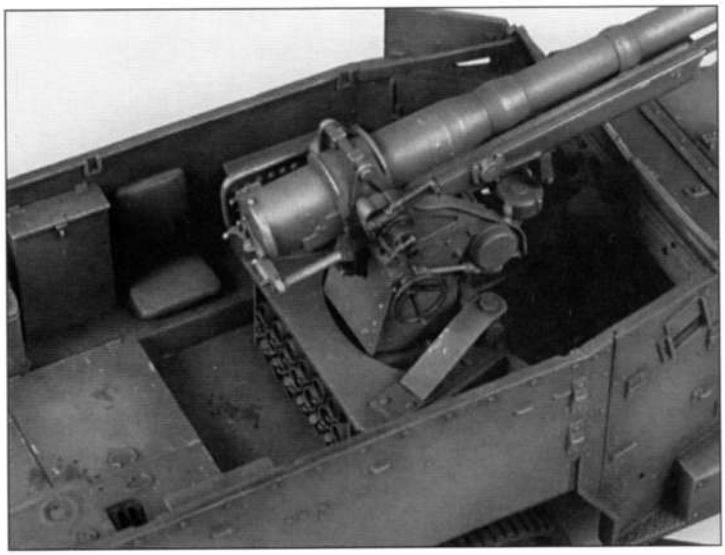
The 75mm mount sits on top of the ammo stowage rack so that's constructed next. It is a resin box to which you attach a number of different length ammo tubes. The end result looks great. The lower gun mount is a single piece of resin with a cross bar that attaches to it and holds the cradle. The mount fits on top of the ammo box assembly and can be installed into a track at the front of the rear floor plate (see the shadow area on KMC's page one).

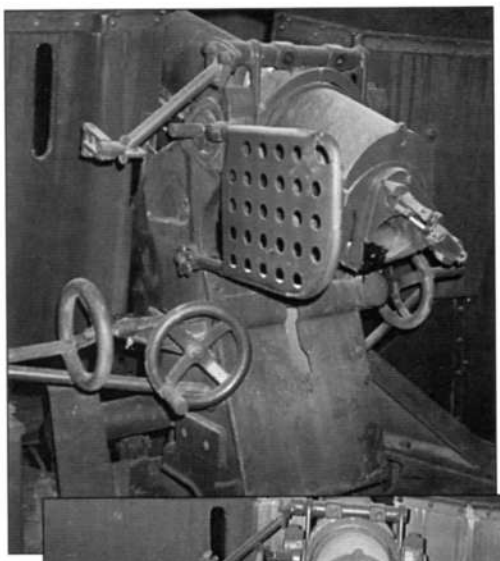
The gun cradle bracket is one piece, but gets a fair number of small resin parts added to it. The recoil tray is six more resin parts and the gun tube is nicely done, with a front and back end to which were installed just fewer than ten small parts that detail the breach end. There is an option to close the breach block (it comes molded open) and only needs a little sanding to rearrange, but you have to decide which way to go early or else risk breaking details off while manhandling the parts.

You have to use your own rod stock to make the shafts of the hand wheels for elevation and azimuth, and the gun travel lock needs some more short lengths. Here I wished KMC had provided exact dimensions to cut these to, but I am not complaining. Maybe next time. Also, I was not entirely clear about KMC part 13 (good number!) and where to put the unnumbered small bit that goes on the other end of the rod you have to make attach to number one-three. Small complaint here since I got this to work after a fashion.

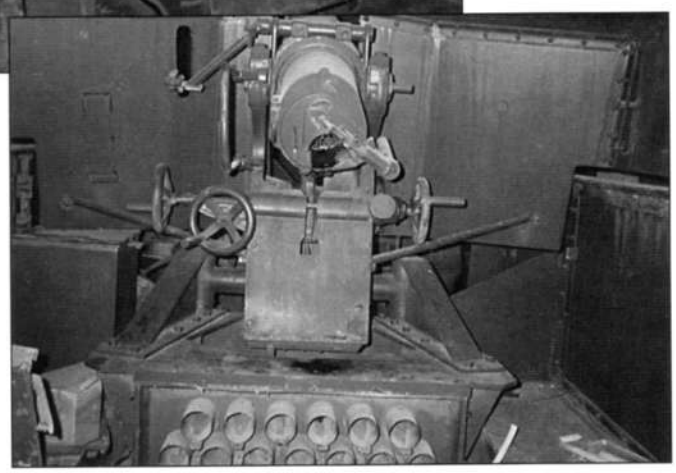
It seemed a shame to cover up all this nice resin work, but there is a big gun shield to add once you assemble it from the provided PE parts. The main shield has left and right halves which are bent to make the sides and then attached to the common roof. The roof has a crease line in the center and I was not overly sure of how much to bend it but it came out looking correct. Published head on drawings were a help to eyeball the shape.

The sides of the shield and joints between the roof and front plates are strengthened in the same fashion as the real unit, with v-channel reinforcers that are bent up from PE flats and then glued into





Left above and below: some close ups of the gun. After these photos were taken I installed a rod system for the rear tarp. I felt that leaving the shield off was helpful to see the inside of the fighting compartment. Left and below: views of the real thing. KMC got it all right! Note all the internal bracing on the inside of the gun's shield. This vehicle is located at Ft. Knox.



the inside corners. It works too, as the thing got stronger and less freaky to handle after these were installed. You make the shield support rods yourself but KMC included the front brackets for these and some other small shield parts on the PE fret. These are maybe too small for the beginner to tackle, but the "old PE Pros" will not have problems. You do have to be patient with all this because the look of the finished shield is mightily influenced by how well you put the various braces on the big parts.

KMC warns that their PE technique could not do the outer bolts justice so you need to make some for the front and sides of the gun shield. After market bolt heads should work if you have them, so the fix for this is up to you, styrene sliced rod being the other option (which I took). I give credit to KMC for pointing this out since other companies often leave you hanging on such fine points.

Once the attachment of the shield to the carriage/cradle is worked out and you paint the undersides at least, the gun mount is installed into the half-track. It can be positioned a bit, so you will need to decide the pose you want. That brings up the subject of figures.

I have been told that Yanks Miniatures is doing figures for this model conversion. They are planning to release three poses as a set. There will be a crew commander that's leaning out to look around the gun shield and is holding onto the side armor with one hand, and using binoculars with the other. A loader with ready round is looking at the CO for instruction and the gunner is looking back to see if the commander can confirm a hit with the last round fired. They will have steel pots, rolled up sleeves, and simple field gear so that they are generic enough to be used in either the Med or Pacific Theaters. I am told they are being sculpted by Paul Keefe, Jr. who has also done work for Kirin. Watch our mag's figure section for the full skinny when we get a set. They are expecting release in late July (which is after I have to submit this article).

The "finish line"

The finished GMC gets the usual Army paint scheme in my case and since no decals come with it, I scrounged up some generic US type markings for it from the VP dry transfer range. I dinged the large stars up a little by dabbing them with a small piece of tape.

There were some more colorful vehicles documented, such as two very bold camo'd guys in the Osprey book (see below). I took the easy way out. More fun and lets me continue attacking the HUGE PILE OF KITS THAT ATE CLEVELAND that's called my closet.

I cannot say enough good gooey mushy talk about this conversion. It is not for the first timers and not for the timid or anyone who avoids resin and PE brass parts. But it's not so difficult to build and yet is a superb representation of one of the important American WWII weapons. Those that build, say, tank destroyers, will find it looks great sitting next to that new M18 Hellcat.

I want to yell out to KMC, "more, more, MORE!" However, if there is a bad note here, it's that this beauty will get lost in all the popular Kraut hardware that sells just because it's German (quality be damned). And that's a shame because KMC deserves to sell one of these detailed and well designed precision kits to you. I must go have a German beer to celebrate another Allied victory!

—Ken Dugan

MMiR RECCE

KMC 75mm M3 Conversion Set. Kit #35-1007. Kit graciously provided by the manufacturer. Suggested retail price $39.95.

References:

U.S. Tank Destroyers In Combat 1941-1945 by Steven J. Zaloga, Concord Publications Co., 1996. Armor at War Series. Most of the combat photos are in this one.

Standard Guide to U.S. World War II Tanks & Artillery, by Konrad F. Schreier, Jr, Krause Publications, 1994. See chapter 17 for the GMC information.

American Combat Vehicles, Vol.1, Halftracks, by James Steuard & Rick Fines, Barron Publishing, 1976. Out of print and rare book with a few large photos of the GMC and a decent line drawing.

American Half-Tracks of World War 2, by Chris Ellis and Peter Chamberlain, Bellona Publications. Another out of print reference on all forms of the M3 series.

US Half-Tracks of World War II by Steven J. Zaloga, Osprey-Vanguard 31, 1994. Color cut-away of M3 75mm GMC included and an ultra-spiffo shot of a Marine vehicle on Tinian in 1944.

Son of Kong

155mm HOWITZER MOTOR GUN CARRIAGE M-41 'GORILLA'

All photos by Barry Beaudry

The M-41 can trace its roots back to the summer of 1941 when U.S. Army Ordinance Committee requested a light-weight, self-propelled gun. Two prototypes based on a stretched M5 Stuart hull were built by the Cadillac company: the T-16 mounting a 4.5 inch gun; and the T-64 mounting a 155mm Howitzer M1. In February of 1943 both vehicles were sent to the field artillery board at Fort Bragg, North Carolina for evaluation. The vehicles performed satisfactorily but had problems in that the gun was unable to depress below horizontal and the manually operated spade required reinforcing. In addition, when firing the main gun, damage was incurred by the stowage on the front of the vehicle and there was a lack of adequate ventilation to the drivers compartment.

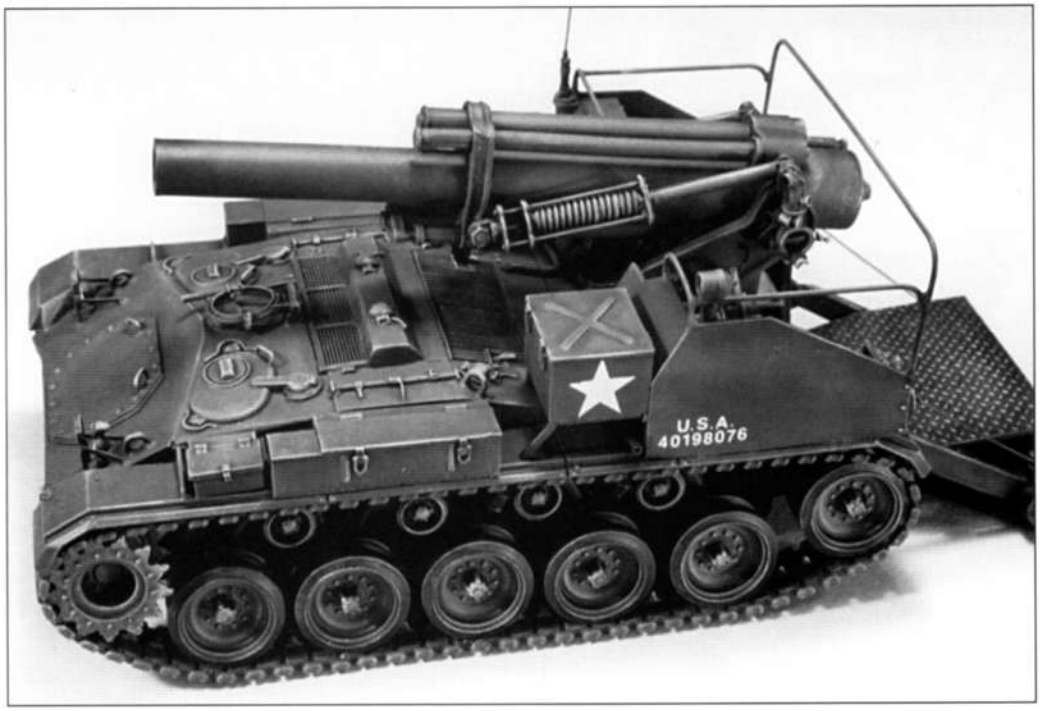
During this time a similar vehicle was being developed following the combat team concept. This was a series of special purpose vehicles and self propelled guns based on the T-24 or Chaffee chassis. The armored board rejected the 4.5 inch gun in favor of the 155mm howitzer. In January 1944 construction of a pilot vehicle designated T-64E1 was approved. A contract was issued to Cadillac in January 1945 and a pilot vehicle was delivered to Fort Knox for evaluation. The vehicle was superior to either the T-16 or the T-64 automotively and included the improved suspension of the M-24. Minor modifications were made and the vehicle was accepted for service as the 155mm Howitzer motor gun carriage M-41.

The M-41 used basically the same chassis as the M-19 anti-aircraft motor carriage with the engine mounted in the center of the vehicle, and the drivers compartment being almost identical to the M-24. The 155mm Howitzer was mounted to the rear allowing 45 degree elevation and -5 degree depression of the weapon, with 20.5 degree traverse to the right and 17 degree to the left. A maximum of 22 155mm rounds could be stored under the gun. Due to the lack of storage and crew space, a companion vehicle was proposed as a munitions carrier, but this was canceled due to the end of the war. Extra rounds were usually carried in a towed M-39 cargo trailer.

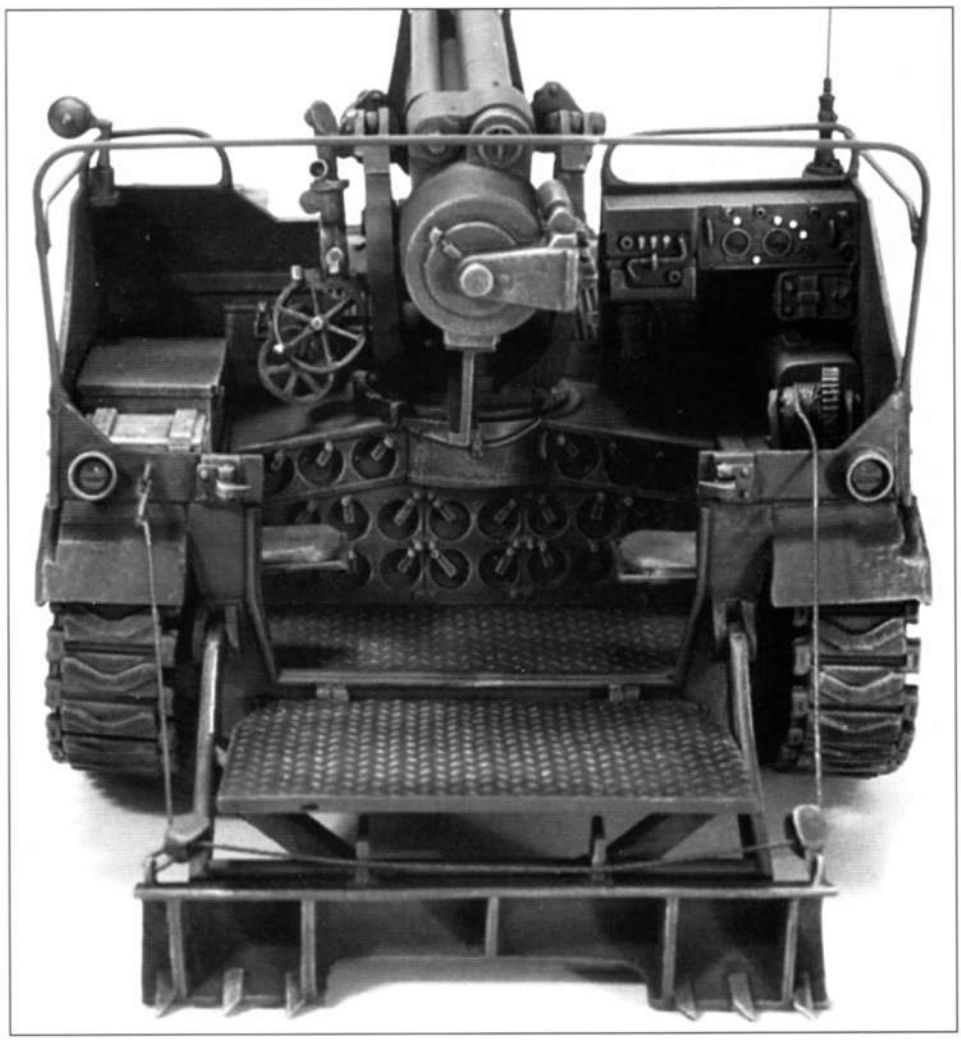
Production was limited to only 85 vehicles manufactured by the Massey Harris Co., with one being shipped to Britain for evaluation. The M-41 saw service in the post war years, as well as extensive action in the Korean war, most notably with the 92nd field artillery battalion (Red Devils), where it set several firing records. The mobility and fire power of the M-41 allowed it to be utilized in a multitude of different rolls, where it was employed with devastating effects. It remained in service until the mid 1950's, when it was finally retired from service.

What's In The Box?

The kit is comprised entirely of resin and white metal. The hull is a beautifully cast one piece affair with a fully detailed bottom, and many of the finer bits molded on. The shear number of parts will seem intimidating at first glance. However, the instructions are broken down into three groups; main gun, hull and suspension, fighting compartment and spade. A parts list is conveniently given for each of the groups. Sort the parts in this manner and things won't be so tough. Commanders has made the clean-up process easier by keeping the pour plugs to a minimum and casting groups of parts on something reminiscent of an injection molded sprue. The folks at Commanders seem to be making a real conscious effort to make things easier on the modeler.



Above: the finished vehicle is a pretty good representation of the real thing. The tracks are flexible type resin and go on real well. I added a few of the smaller fittings from the scrap box and the headlight guards and frame-work for the all-weather cover were made from brass stock. Below: the working end of the 155mm main gun. I added the ammo box and you may want to clutter it up some. I left it mostly bare to show off all the detail. Check out the cool looking radio. Facing page top: the counter balance springs were tricky to build but tons of fun. Below that: the sexy looking front deck. Other shots: the fighting compartment from above. The cover frame really sets it all off. The antenna mount is from the parts box.



Hull

The fenders and fighting compartment should be attached first. This will allow you to fill any small gaps from inside the fighting compartment and under the fenders. The tail lights, which are cast on the rear panels (parts 10 and 11) should have brush guards that attach to the rear panel and the top of the fender. These were not included in the kit and I failed to catch it (I'm not worthy).

To fill the gaps, I used a really cool product from Gunze-Sangyo called Mr. Surfacer. This is a liquid filler which is brushed into gaps or surfaces with an old brush. The brush can be cleaned using lacquer thinner. You can't fill canyons with this stuff, but it works great on gaps, sink holes, and yes, surfaces. In many cases, you won't even have to sand. This stuff is liquid love.

The suspension posed no major problems, except for over pour in some of the locating holes for the swing arms and the return roller mounts. I opened all the holes up using a drill, attached the return roller mounts, and was back in business. The ride height was established by attaching the front and rear most swing arms and their shock absorbers. This established a level plane, allowing the rest of the swing arms to be set by simply placing the model on a flat surface. The rest of the suspension details were added per the instructions. The road wheels and return rollers were mounted using a length of track as a guide. The tracks feature a rubber chevron and are probably the most user friendly resin tracks I have seen to date. One could almost attach them without any heating. I thought about trying that for a moment, but opted for the boiling water treatment, discretion being the better part of valor. Keep trying guys, you're onto something here.

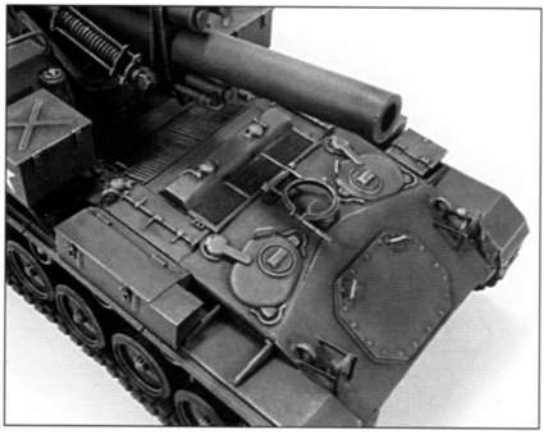
The upper hull details were added per the instructions. I kept my references handy to verify placement and the locations of grab handles and other fine details. The gun travel lock should be moved forward from where the instructions indicate. The prominent tool storage rack which mounts to the front inspection plate is not included in the kit. This could be swiped from a DML M-46, or scratch built. My review sample was a pre-production run, so some of the smaller details were not yet cast. I rummaged through my Shermy spares and found the necessary parts, such as lift hooks, headlights, search light and a Verlinden antenna mount. These parts will be included in the kit by the time it hits a store near you (thank God for U.S. Standardization).

The brush guards were made from brass strip, and the various grab handles were made out of brass rod. The headlights and search light were drilled to accept MV lenses #116. The frame work for the protective canvas also was not included at this time, so I fabricated it out of .030 brass wire.

The fighting compartment is straight forward and begs for the addition of personnel gear. You stowage geeks out there will have a field day. I would have liked to have seen the addition of shells and a little more stuff, but what the heck. We got an M-41, right? Besides, the radio is too cool.

Main Gun

The key to the assembly of the main gun is the horse collar, which is the bracket that mounts the main gun, recuperator and counterbalance springs.



This part is keyed, which allows proper alignment between the two gun segments. The small holes for the recoil guides and recuperator were carefully opened up with a drill bit. This will allow the various tubes to be slid into their final position. Do not clean up the large center hole. It will appear a little messy, i.e. over pour, but it fits perfectly with the two gun segments. Once I was satisfied with the alignment, the three pieces were glued together. The breech block required a little fine sanding on its mating surface to make it's square with the main gun. At this point, I positioned all the tubes and glued them into position. Remember, the two outboard holes on the bottom require short tube lengths, part 22.

The counter balance springs were a little tricky, but were my favorite part of the whole project. The three tiny holes in part 13 were opened up with a pin vise. This allows three 28mm lengths of brass rod, which represent spring tension rods, to be slid into position. There will be about 3 to 4mm sticking out. Make sure these are all the same length and attach part #20, lower mounting clevis.

With the gun nestled in the 'A' frame, the springs were blue tacked (you know, that squishy stuff) to their mounting points. Parts 21, which are the guide rods, were slid into the springs and attached to their mounting points on the top of the 'A' frame. I trimmed the length of part 21 as I went, until I achieved the desired elevation.

It sounds harder then it really was. Refer to your references or these photos for the positioning of the traverse and elevation wheels. Make sure they don't interfere with the top of the ammo storage racks. Add your gun sight and the rest of the small details and you are rocking.

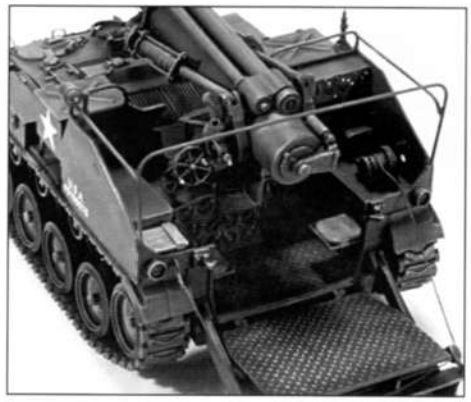
The ace of spades

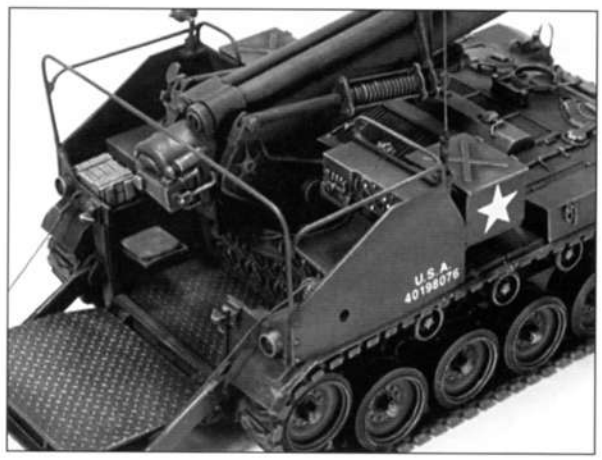
The instructions suggest that you sub assemble the spade and attach it after painting. This would make sense if you were going to model the vehicle with the spade in the up position. Being that I'm a spade down kind of guy, I opted to attach everything at this point. Assemble the spade per the instructions and be sure to check that it will be level with the ground when it is finally attached. I bent some tiny hooks from brass wire and attached them to the ends of the spade and the rear of the fighting compartment. Another set of hooks was made and attached to the pulleys. The pulleys then were attached to the hooks on the spade. This was done in a way which allowed the pulleys to kinda flop around.

An extra long piece of fine thread was wound around the winch. The winch should be positioned on a slight angle, with the large gear facing outboard. The cable should be feeding off the top of the drum as shown in the photos. Thread the cable through the pulleys and secure it to the hook on the rear of the fighting compartment. With the spade down, the cable should not appear taught. The gun cleaning rods and other miscellaneous tools were usually stored on the top of the spade. These details are not provided in the kit, but would not be that hard to add. The crew platform was the last thing to go on and it features a really fetching tread pattern.

Paint and finish

The whole model was first sprayed with an acrylic flat black. Floquil dark green was sprayed in a way that allowed some of the black under coat to show through. The finish was allowed to dry for a few days and a coat of Floquil flat from a can was applied. The tracks and details were hand painted and the entire model was washed with oils and dry brushed. Pre-size dry transfers were used for the markings.





This is probably Commanders most comprehensive kit release to date. The detail and the quality of the castings are right up there with the European manufactures. At just over a hundred clams retail, you get a lot of bang for the buck. The super detail nuts will find room for additions here and there and the out of the box jocks will have their hands full with a pile of parts. The finished model is very impressive and would be a good subject for the diorama crowd. In this writer's humble opinion, this ape is great!

—Nick Vanston

MMiR RECCE

Commanders Series M-41 Motor Gun Carriage. No kit number. Kit graciously provided by the manufacturer. Suggested retail $110.00.

References:

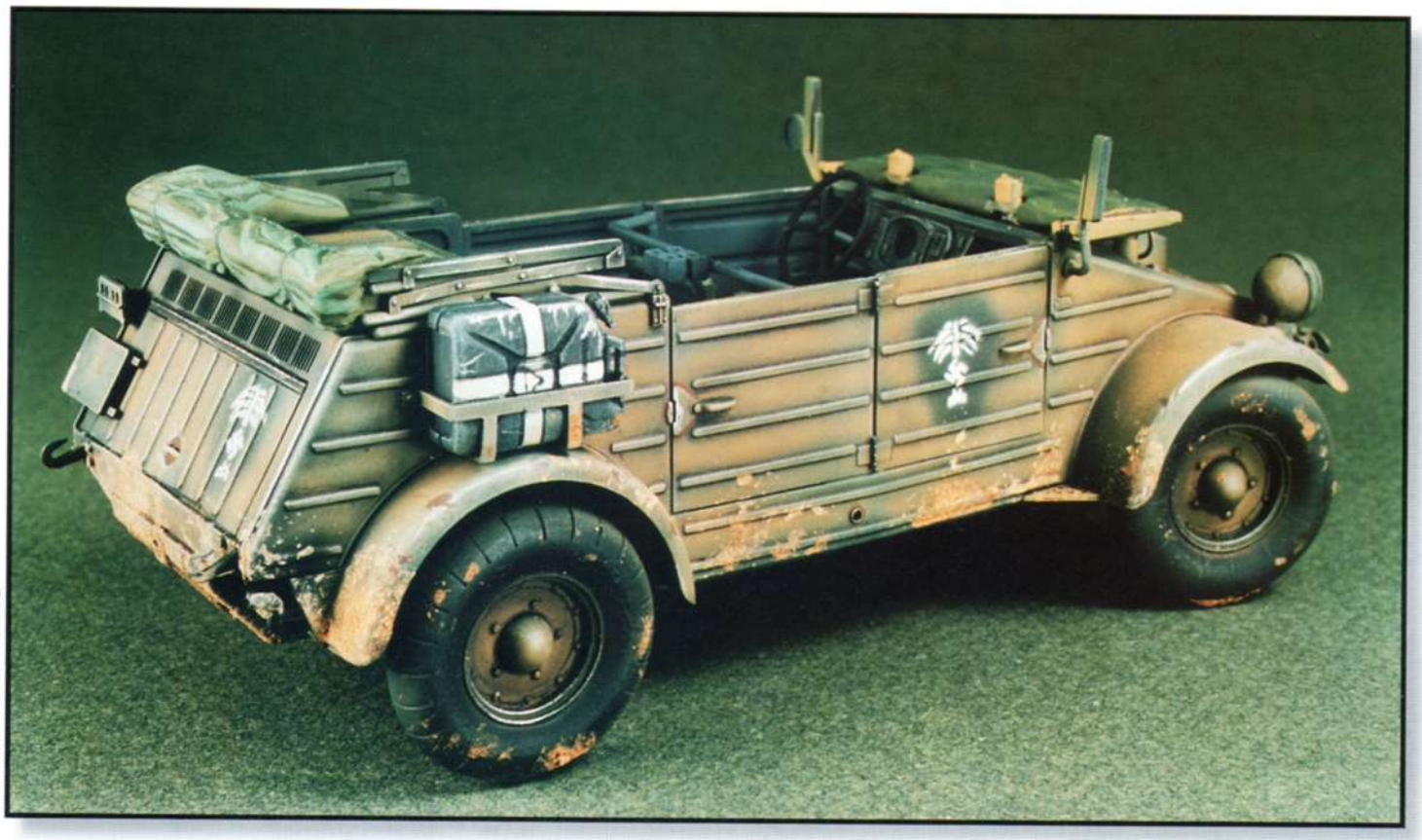
Stuart, a History of the American Light Tank by R.P. Hunnicutt, Presidio Press. The most expensive of all the references listed. Betcha didn't know the M-41 was in here. A decent account of all the "Combat Team" vehicles.

M-24 Chaffee in Action by Jim Mesko, Squadron Signal Publications. The "best of." Good photos and color plates.

Armour of the Korean War by Simon Dunstan, Osprey Vanguard #27. No photos of our simian friend, but a great color plate illustrating the 92nd Arty's Red Devil insignia.

Kübel Lives!

Tamiya drives across the finish line with it's brand new version



Finished model photos by Chris Mrosko

I guess I've always been a big fan of the Kübelwagen. Perhaps it harks back to the days when I drove my own in the form of a beat-up old Beetle. Underneath all those curves lurked a Kübelwagen in its basic form.

Those of you who know German vehicles well may not know that the Kübel story is a fairly diverse one. There were several different models and in case you've ever wondered what the heck a Type 82 was, here's the short version.

Kübel lore

The first military type was the Type 62 and this looked somewhat like a squashed Kübel, with the body pan being a lot shorter vertically. The Type 82 followed and this was the basic vehicle used throughout the war. This type was manufactured in several variants like an ambulance version, a pick-up, a van, and even an armored version. One of the more interesting versions was the Type 82E, which was a Beetle body dropped onto the Kübel chassis (this being a chassis specifically designed and equipped for off-road use).

Unlike its Allied counterpart, the Kübel was two-wheel drive. However, the Germans did conjure up several versions with four-wheel drive. Perhaps the most well know is the Type 166, the famous Schwimmwagen. There also was a slightly longer vehicle which proceeded it called the Type 128.

The Beetle body was used on these 4WD types. There were two nearly identical versions, The Type 92SS and the Type 87. The 92 resembled the Beetle mostly and only its slightly higher ground clearance revealed its capabilities. This car had a few other special custom interior features that the SS had ordered, hence its designation. The Type 87 was a bit more ballsy, with wider fenders and off-road knobbies. Most also had large canvas folding roof panels. Surprisingly, well over 500 of these were produced during the war, with many seeing service with the Luftwaffe.

Kübel model lore

Well, the Kübelwagen in model form has taken a long and winding road to where it is today. I guess it's safe to say that road began somewhere in Japan. I'm not sure which manufacturer was the first to release a version of the Kübel, but Nitto, Otaki and Tamiya all played their part in the story.

Either way, these were all first generation (to borrow a term from the computer world) kits from the late sixties and early seventies and for their day they were all fine kits. Somewhat out of place in our story, but nevertheless also a contender is the infamous and mammoth 1/9 scale ESCI kit of 1978. This was the deluxe way to go, but didn't much satisfy the 1/35th scale crowd.

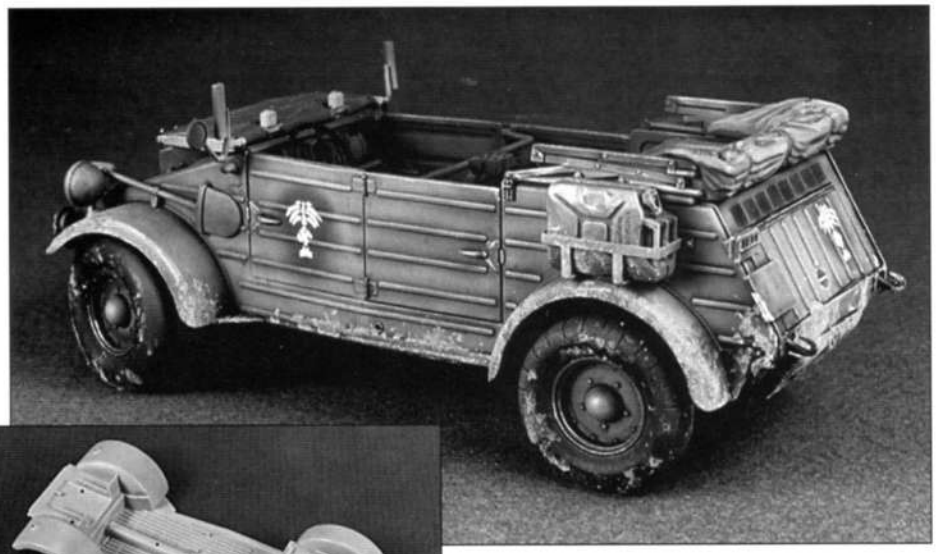
That came the following year with the release of the "second generation" kit, the Italeri Kübelwagen. This was and still is a primo kit and it was very technically advanced for its time.

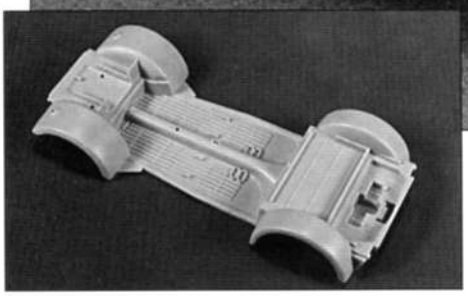
From there we take a tremendous leap to the mid-nineties with the release of the Hasegawa Kübelwagen, later to become the Dragon kit. In my eyes, it was one of the finest kits ever produced. I thought that this third generation kit would complete the journey and put this veteran model subject to rest.

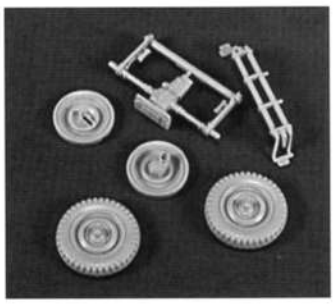
Suddenly out of nowhere Tamiya springs a fourth generation Kübelwagen on the market. It's pretty obvious that the tooling of this kit was definitely a labor of love. I bet that there will never be another Kübelwagen as fine as this one. I will go out on a limb and say that this is the finest 1/35th scale soft skin ever produced in plastic.

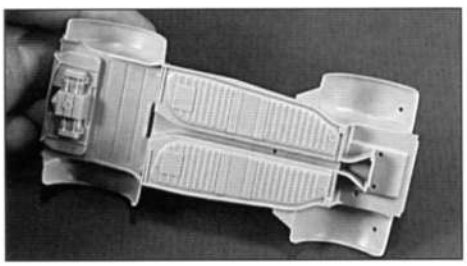
Kübel Kit

The Tamiya kit is molded in tan styrene and it consists of 49 flash free parts. There are thirteen steps in the instructions for the assembly of the kit.



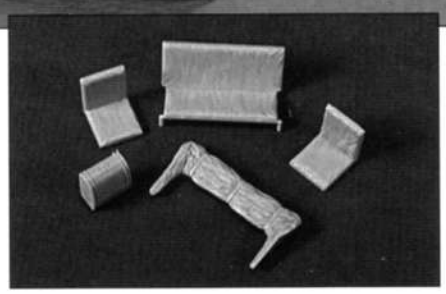






Top: another view of the Afrika car. Stencilit templates were used for the marking. Below right: the gray dude ready to roll. Above and below: the highly detailed body pan. Right: some of the finely rendered suspension components. Below right: some funky Cossack dance? No, it's the driver figure. One of his legs hangs out of the side door.

Right here: the gray dude. Below: some of the interior parts.



very quick build. So quick in fact that I decided to build two kits. One of those shown in the photos is straight out of the box, while the other uses the new add-on set for the Kübel made by Warriors Scale Models. This very simple kit supplies sand tires, a canvas windshield cover, the aforementioned headlight covers and two jerrycans with brackets for mounting on the sides of the vehicle. It's pretty cheap, too at around thirteen dollars.

Kübelpainten

Both my Kübelwagens were painted with Tamiya acrylic paints. The gray baby was first base coated with German gray and a fine mottled armor yellow pattern was applied over the top of the gray using an Iwata Micron airbrush.

The Afrika Korps version was painted in much the same fashion, but I continued to add the yellow until the base coat was barely showing through. Both models were washed and weathered using Windsor-Newton oil paints and Vallejo acrylic paints produced in Spain. The markings for the gray Kübel are box stock, while the desert car's marking were made using Stencilit stencils.

—Darrel Licht

The decals include a variety of markings from the Italian campaign to the Russian front.

There are several areas of the kit that have really been given a great deal of detail. The first of these areas is the lower chassis/body pan. The interior of the pan includes the raised floor boards that are missing from all previous Kübelwagen kits. Also included are the rifle stock brackets for the K98 rifles and their corresponding upper brackets are on the upper crossbar support. Tamiya also has molded the housing area for the spare five gallon jerry can, which is located under the front right portion of the hood. The bottom side of the chassis also is finely detailed.

Inside, the seats have been beautifully reproduced, including wrinkles and creases. Moving on to the canopy, it also has been reproduced with convincing wrinkles and creases. Even the tie-down straps have been rendered. The frame for the top is provided, too and it is molded in plastic rather than photo-etched, which some folks find a royal pain.

The front torsion bar suspension is spot-on and Tamiya even got the correct spacing between the tires and fenders. No engine is supplied in the kit, but there is a half engine supplied for the bottom of the engine area. Oddly, the back of the rear firewall is detailed, so this may seem to indicate that one may eventually become available.

The lack of an engine is one of two nits I had to pick with this kit. The other is the headlights. Only about ten percent of Kübels had painted over headlights with a small slit left unpainted like the kit. The rest had the issued canvas style black out covers. It would be nice to have the option of either light—more on this later.

As far as construction goes, there is truly nothing of note to report. I encountered no problems at all and due to this and the fact that it's small, it's a

MMiR RECCE

Tamiya Kuebelwagen. Kit number 35213. Kit graciously provided by the manufacturer. Suggested retail $17.50.
Warriors Scale Models Kübelwagen Detailing Set. Kit number 35144 Kit graciously provided by the manufacturer. Suggested retail $12.95.

References

Der Kübelwagen Typ 82 im Zweiten Weltkreig by J. Piekalkiewicz, Motorbuch Verlag, 1996. A great German language book that is filled with photos of the Type 82 literally from cover to cover. Well worth the $22.00 price tag even if you can't read German.

VW at War, German Cars and Trucks in World War II Vol. I, Kübelwagen and Schwimmwagen Book 1, by Michael Sowodny, Schiffer Publishing, 1990.

VW at War, German Cars and Trucks in World War II Vol. VI, VW Beetle at War by Hans-Georg Mayer, Schiffer Publishing, 1992.

VW at War, German Cars and Trucks in World War II Vol. VII, Kübelwagen and Schwimmwagen Book 2, by Bernd Wiersch, Schiffer Publishing, 1992.

These three bargained priced books (all under nine dollars each) tell the complete story of the VW at war and are a treasure trove for those interested in the subject. Most of the fat books couldn't do it better.

Unic-fication

A yummy French treat from H&K

All photos by Joe Morgan

Among the many pieces of French Army equipment impressed into German service after the fall of France in 1940 were the Unic P-107 BU half tracks. Originally an engineer vehicle, it was designed to pull a trailer with pontoons. The Germans modified them with a troop carrier bed (resulting in the long name!). The production line was started up again during the occupation and some of these vehicles received an armored body similar to the SdKfz 250. Most were used by Panzer Brigade West, the recipient of the ingenious Major Becker's many modifications of French hardware.

H&K 35, formerly known as NKC, is my favorite resin kit manufacturer. Their casting is absolutely stunning: the tiny honeycomb grillwork in the radiator has to be seen to be believed. The parts are cast in sheets, so there are no big plugs to remove, but there is a good bit of cleanup, as the technique leaves a line of resin around each part. Still, I find this easier and less likely to break a delicate part than the removal of plugs. That's not to say I didn't break some, though.

There are 98 resin parts included, seven of which are not used on this variant. Part number 110 is the windshield glass, which was not included. No big deal, as there's lots of thin clear plastic around to use.

Unic-fication

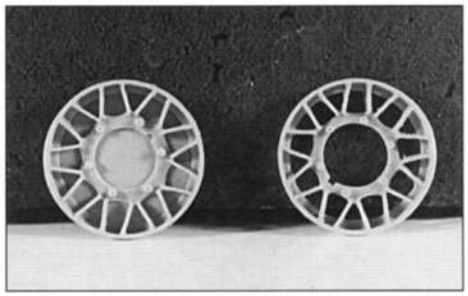
The plans consist of a couple of sheets of not very clear exploded drawings; one of the chassis and running gear and one of the cab and bed; a parts list; and a short history. This means plenty of dry fitting; look on this as an opportunity to fondle the lovely little castings and you'll enjoy it a lot more!

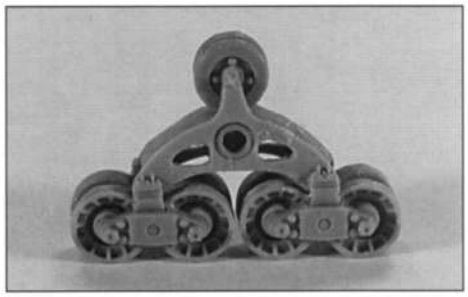
I started with the gas tank, as this needs to be installed first before the running gear. An odd point here; the filler neck is on top, and so is covered by the bed. How the hell did they put gas in this thing? I can't imagine somebody crawling under the truck in the mud to fill it up. There must have been some kind of access hatch in the bed, but it isn't visible, so I scribed one in. Anyway, glue the cross member (part 11) onto the tank before you drop it into the frame.

The running gear was next. The front is a straightforward beam axle on leaf springs, common to trucks and cars of the period. A little familiarity with this suspension type will help, but dry fitting will answer any questions of the younger readers.

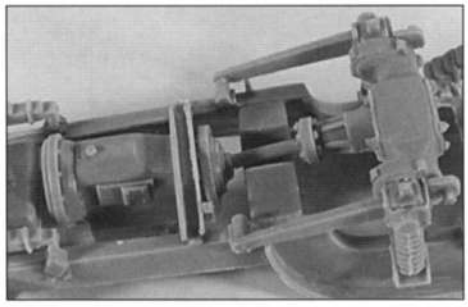
The leaf springs (both front and rear) are cast integral with the frame, so you don't have to worry about getting stuff wonky here. Put on the axle (part 2), then add the struts for the lever type shock absorbers (parts 9 for the right, 10 for the other). The short arm goes to the shock body on the frame; they're those round things above the axle with the heavy mounting gussets.

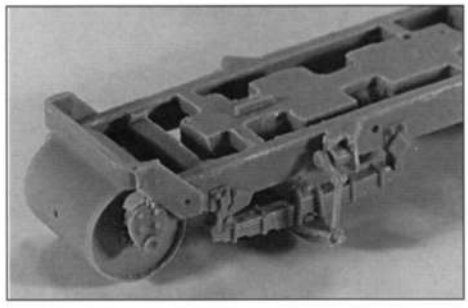
The wheels go on next. Two sets of front wheels are provided, one set numbered 5 and 6, one 3 and 4. There's no explanation of which one is which, so I used the ones (5&6) shown in the photo on the front of the plan. The bolt pattern on these also matched the ones on the spare. Before you put the left front wheel on, place the steering arm in its hole in the frame. You may have to drill this out to accept the arm. Then glue on the wheel, and manipulate the end of the arm into its hole in the brake drum before the glue sets up. Do some extra dry fitting here, it'll help a lot. Now put the other wheel on, and fit the steering (drag) link, part 8,

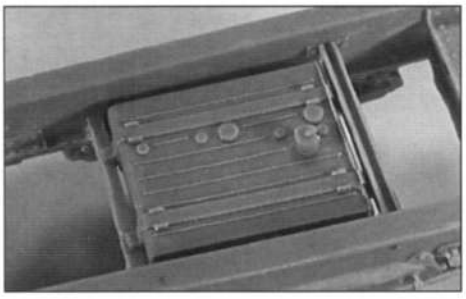


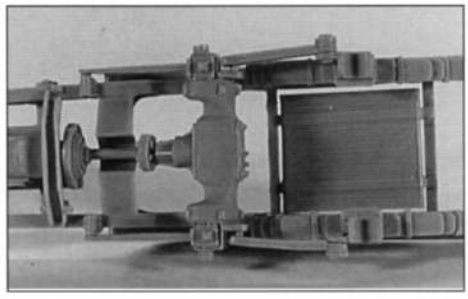


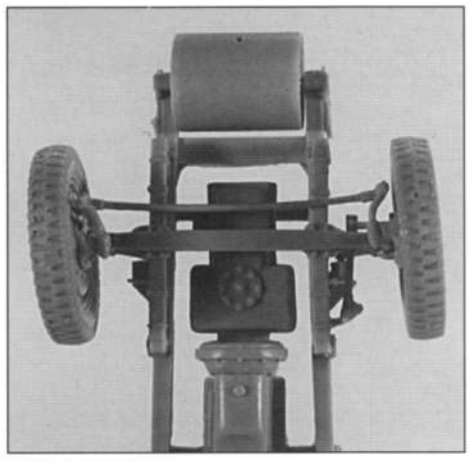
Above: parts layout; note most parts are in sheets instead of the more common plug arrangement. Left; the radiator opening. Check out the gorgeous casting on the honeycomb pattern.











Above left: the gas tank and cross member in place; notice how the filler cap is directly under the bed. Top middle: beautiful casting on the drive sprockets; the one on the right has been cleaned up Below that: the differential in place. The coil springs and the rods leading forward to the frame locate it. Above middle: struts in place from differential to the rear springs. Notice how the struts have a pronounced inward 'lean.' Top right: a completed bogie; again, more spectacular casting. Below that: the left front suspension with shock absorber arm in place. Notice the hole in the frame for the steering arm. The tie rod in place between the two front wheels. It has a pronounced bow.

to the two mounts on the backs of the wheels. There's enough slack in the wheel mounting pins so that you can turn the wheels a bit—it adds character.

While you're working on this end, put the roller and its brace/mud scraper, parts 40 and 41 respectively, in place on and between the front frame horns.

Now on to the rear suspension. This looks pretty complex, but it all falls right together, as long as you take your time and dry fit! First put on the frame cross member, part 13. Now put the coil springs, parts 20, in place, making sure they're straight up and down. Put the drive shaft, part 17, in place on the rear differential, part 18, and install. There's no room to put the drive shaft in with the diff in place, so you gotta do it this way.

It gets a bit tricky now. Idlers and suspension arms have been assembled. To get the bogies properly aligned, the idlers should be touching the ground as should the bogie wheels. Block the back end of the chassis up level; I found a little piece of 'one by' was just right. Now glue the suspension arms/idlers combo in place. Let this set up, then add the bottom of the center mounts, parts 27. Now put the bogies on; idlers and bogie wheels should all be touching the surface. Put the outer idler arms, parts 28 and 29, on, then the drive sprockets, which do not touch the ground. Add the beautifully cast and detailed tow hitch, and it's time for paint.

French Army vehicles of this period had black painted chassis and wheels, and some photos show the Germans didn't bother to repaint these areas. I liked the idea, so I sprayed the undercarriage and suspension black. The tires were given a coat of tire black (flat black mixed with a little green and dark gray) and the metal surfaces of the drive sprockets, road wheels, and idlers were given a coat of gunmetal. The exhaust, painted hull red, was then added to the chassis.

Now the tracks can go on. The real tracks are rubber, similar to the type used on U.S. half-tracks and the kit ones seem to be made of rubber or something very close to it. Don't waste a link here, because the tracks are an exact fit. Provided are four long lengths, and four lengths of two shoes. The instructions don't tell you how to install them, but I put a long length from the top of the drive sprocket back across the return roller to the idler. I hit this with the heat gun, and it curled right into place. I put the two short lengths on the drive sprocket from where the top section left off, and then added the other long piece, going down the remainder of the drive sprocket, across the bogie wheels, and mating with the other long one on the bottom of the idler.

After the tracks were on, my carefully done alignment to get the idlers and bogie wheels touching at the same time was all for naught. I thought about this for a couple of weeks before building the suspension, and it still didn't work right. I have no suggestions here; maybe somebody out there can figure it out.

Beddy-by

All these flat parts were pretty badly warped. The heat gun didn't have much effect, so I soaked 'em in hot water for about five minutes, then clamped them to a flat surface to set up. They still weren't perfect, but were close enough so I could glue and clamp them together to take care of the rest. Since this was all wood, I brushed on a thick coat of Pactra Light Earth before spraying with a light coat of Panzer Gray. I wanted the brown to show through in the cracks between the boards.

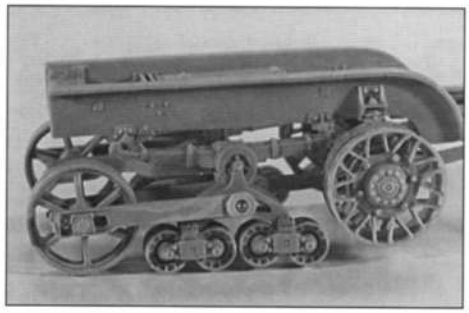
Next the seats went in after the metal and wood parts got a coat of gray and the seats themselves khaki. Then assemble the spare to its mount (part 87). The instructions don't show where this goes; luckily I took some pictures of the vehicle at Saumur last summer, and they show the spare mounted on the front inside wall of the bed.

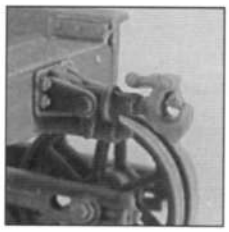
Somebody call me a cab

I started out thinking that this would be a conventional truck build, in other words build the cab, glue it on, then the front fenders, then the rear fenders. Turned out, contrary to the instructions, that the whole thing can be built as a unit before gluing to the frame. This makes everything a lot easier.

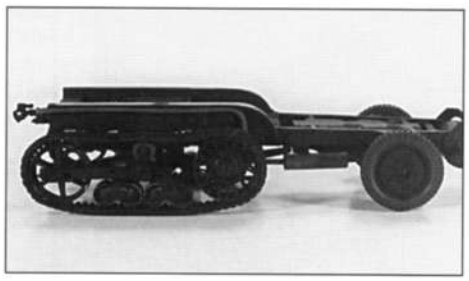
First install the firewall, part 55; the parts list calls this the 'front floor'. Maybe a problem with translation? Next, put in all the pedals and levers. There's a normal compliment of pedals—brake, clutch and gas; I lost the gas pedal to tweezer launch so I replaced it from my spares. I brushed the interior with Pactra medium gray, then went back and did the lever handles in black and the shift boot in dark gray.

I painted the instrument panel, part 56, the same gray as the rest of the interior, and painted the dials white and the knobs black. There's a flat plate on the dash that I did in brass. The steering column was painted the interior color and the steering wheel

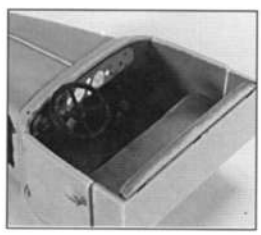


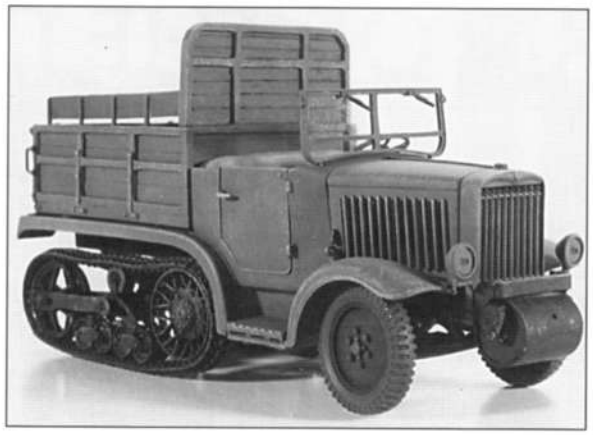


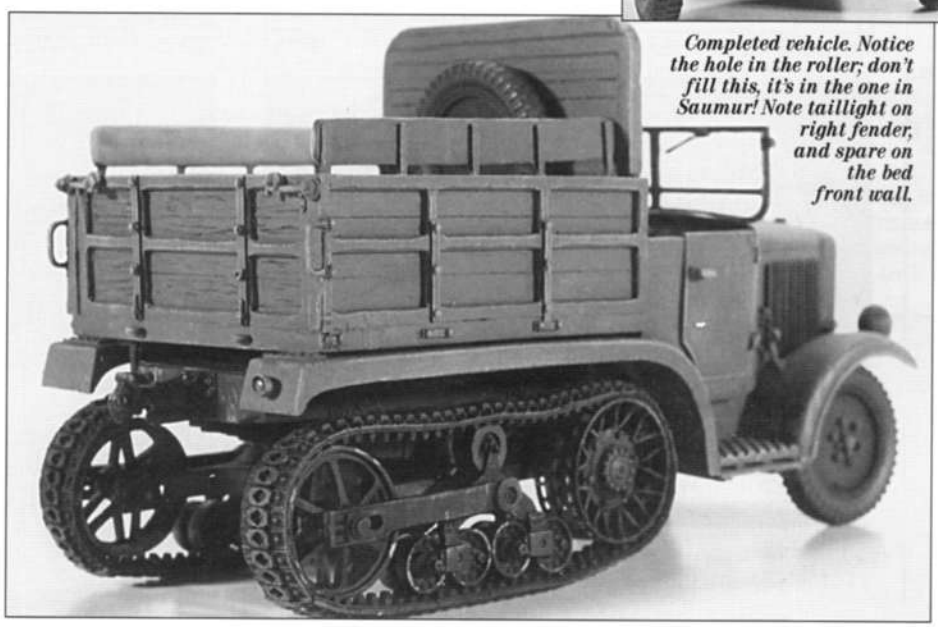
Above: close-up of completed rear suspension. Take your time, dry fit, it's easier than it looks! Left: the tow hook is a little work of art unto itself. Below: the chassis with complete running gear after its coat of black paint.



Right: the cab interior complete with dashboard and steering column and wheel. Visible on the right side door jamb is the styrene shim to help with the door fit.







Completed vehicle. Notice the hole in the roller; don't fill this, it's in the one in Saumur! Note taillight on right fender, and spare on the bed front wall.

black. Note that there's a recess on the back of the column that fits a protrusion on the dash; dry fitting showed the protrusion needed a little sanding to fit the column. Then I glued on the steering wheel, and dry fitted these two. Turns out the hole on the floor that the column goes into needed to be drilled out a bit deeper to let everything fit. Next I painted the metal frame on the seat interior gray, with the cushions Model Master khaki, drybrushed with light tan.

The doors provided a bit of trouble. One (the right) didn't fit the door opening at the top. I tried to flex the cab to close the gap, but it was too much. I put a .015 sheet styrene shim at the rear of the opening, and shaved it so it was full thickness at the top and a whisker (actually smaller) at the bottom. The other door had a little gap at the top, but didn't need a shim. I knew I could close these gaps by pinching the top of the cab together; I also knew I didn't want to try to do this by hand until the glue set up really well. The solution was a simple wooden jig and a clamp. The nails allowed the top of the jig to flex, applying pressure where I needed it. It worked like a charm!

Next comes some tricky, or what our Brit buddies would call "fiddly," bits. These are the hood latches; they're small and very fragile, so be careful cleaning them up. You'll only need four part 49, the part that goes on the hood, and four part 50, the latch itself, and two part 51 (whatever it is). There's an extra provided for each set, and it's a good thing. Dry fitting is a must here; the placement of the part on the hood is hazy at best. The fore and aft placement is not the problem, as the edges of the hood louvers provide that. The up and down is the problem. Make sure you don't get them too high! If they're low you can just shorten the shaft on the latch that fits into the mount on the fender. If they're too high, you'll have to extend the shaft. The parts 51 go only on the rear set of latches.

The radiator opening and the hood louvers then got a coat of black paint, preparatory to giving the whole assembly a coat of Panzer gray. The bed got a coat at the same time, making this one of the very few armor models I've ever painted like this. I figured it was easier to do it this way than to mask all the running gear. Taking care to keep everything square and even, I then glued the cab and bed to the chassis, and the taillight to the right fender.

The only thing left was the windshield. I used the frame to trace an outline on .015 clear plastic; although the real thing was in three pieces, I cut one piece of plastic. I just wasn't willing to go through the aggravation fitting three separate pieces, and it looks great from the outside (if you look from the inside, you can see it's one piece). I painted the frame the base color and the windshield wiper blades black.

After I did all the photos of the finished model, I discovered that I'd left off the rear view mirror. Oh, well, it's on now, but you can't see it. I put no markings on, because the photos found showed no I markings.

The finishing touch was a drybrushing with Pactra dark gull gray.

Conclusion

This could be a daunting experience for one with little experience of resin kits, with its intricate cleanup and incomplete instructions. However, I enjoyed every bit of it; the beautiful casting and nice parts fit made the dry fitting a matter of, "Hmmm, let's see, this should go here and... aah, there it is!" instead of bad words and lots of carving on resin stuff that doesn't quite fit. For the armor modeler who enjoys the odd ball, off the beaten path kit, this is a great one. And let's give some credit where it's due... the French did, after all, invent the half-track!

—Joe Morgan

MMiR RECCE

H&K 35 number 351203, Unic P107: Empire Models (John Rauscher), RR3 Box 900, Morrisville VT 05661; kit graciously provided by John; retail cost about $90.

References

Encyclopedia of German Tanks of WWII, by Peter Chamberlain and Hilary Doyle, Arms and Armour, London, 1993.

World War II Military Vehicles, Transport and Halftracks by G.N Georgano, Osprey, London, 1994.

Brummbär!

A honey of a conversion kit from the folks at R&J Enterprises

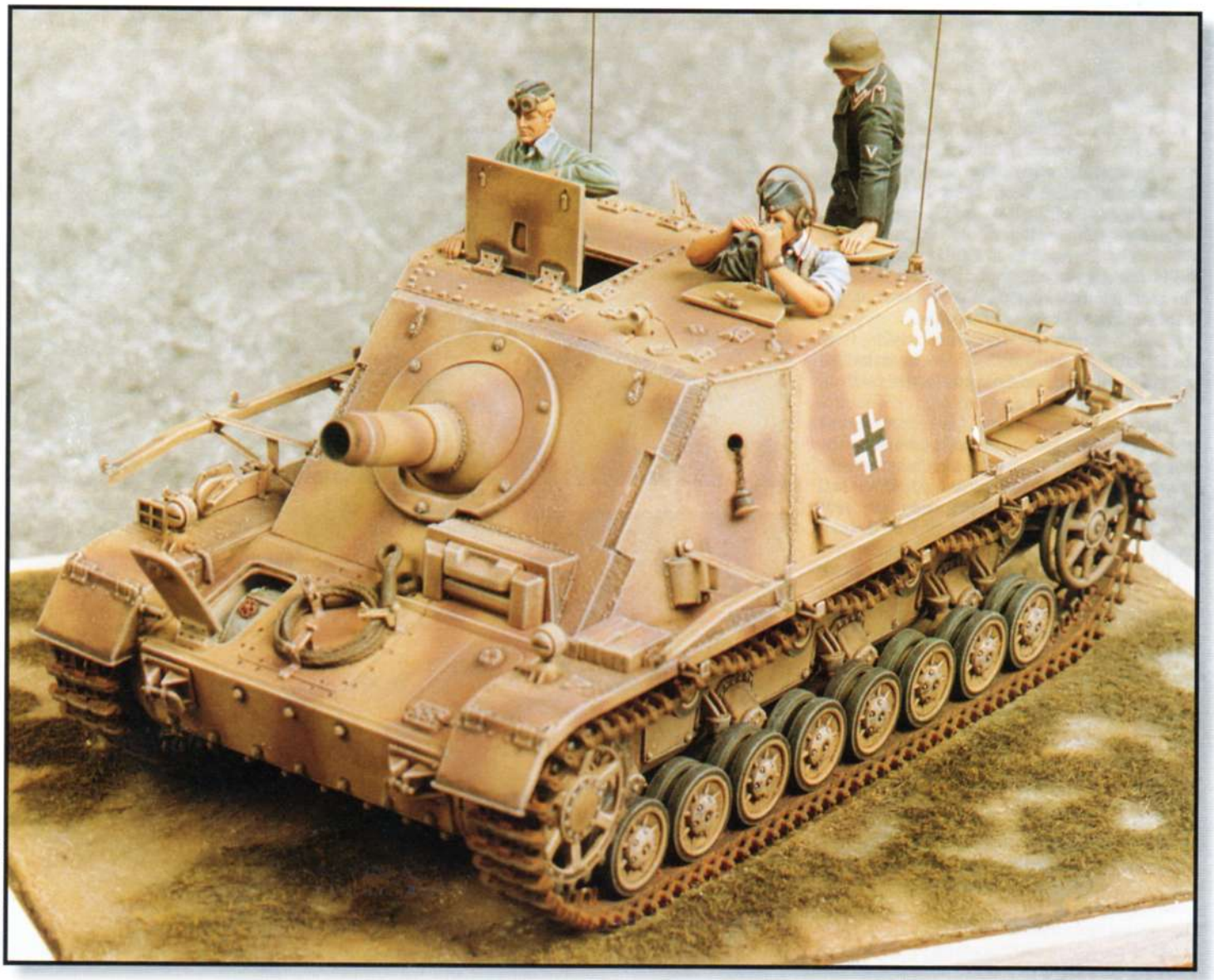
The Brummbär (SdKfz. 166), based on the Panzer IV tank, was a self-propelled 150mm StuH4-1 L/12 howitzer in a fully enclosed fighting compartment. The weapon was developed from the experience at Stalingrad (a.k.a. the Russian School of Hard Knocks) and as a result, was designed for close fighting within the urban areas of Russia.

There are several 1/35 scale models available of the Brummbär. The old Tamiya kit is a mixture of mid and late model features and is not really very accurate in scale. The newer DML Brummbär is much better than the older Tamiya kit, but still has some problems. The newest Brummbär (early version) is from CMK and has its roots in the older Tamiya kit, being basically a plastic conversion kit. A simple alternative to building an accurate Brummbär is to model one using the new R&J Products resin conversion. R&J has three Brummbärs to choose from; early, mid and late production versions. There are three more planned; early, mid and late with Zimmerit. The conversions are made to fit either the Italeri Pz. IV Fl, F2 and G kit (#217) or the DML kit. I also added On-The-Mark photo-etched early Brummbär Schurzen rails.

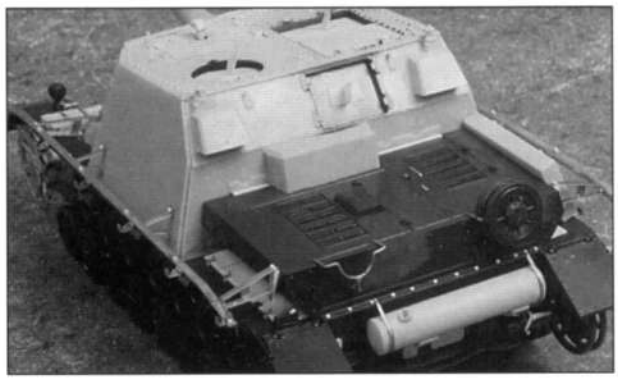
Just Bär with me

The R&J Products early Brummbär conversion kit is made completely of polyurethane resin. The first thing I noticed on opening the box was the number of parts and the quality of the detail. The armor texture on the superstructure plates is about the best I've seen. The next thing was that the superstructure is hollow and all the hatches are positionable. These hatches are so large that an interior set has to be in its future. A partial driver's compartment is included in the conversion kit. The main gun also is positionable.

As with all resin kits, there are pour plugs to remove. The plugs on the R&J parts are not unreasonably large and some time spent wet sanding soon had all the parts ready for assembly. A trick I



All photos by Irving Scible



Left: the model under construction. These shots were all taken just prior to painting, although I did stick on the suspension components for the photos. The different materials are evident in these shots, as are some of my added details. Much of it is on the back deck where I created the spare wheel brackets, a couple of grab handles and detailed the muffler. I mask off the hatches by placing a small strip of masking tape on the sticky side of another then carefully pulling it against the inside of the hatch.

used was to glue the rear wall of the fighting compartment itself to the fighting compartment, then wet sanded them both to ensure all remained level and even. I was ready to move on to the assembly sequences once all the resin parts were cleaned up with luke-warm soapy water and dried.

The first step is to determine how much of the engine deck is needed from the Italeri kit. I checked and double checked the photographs and line drawings for the Brummbär in the book *Achtung Panzer No. 4* and came up with some preliminary figures. I marked a line across the underside of the kit upper hull (part #27) 39mm from the rear edge. I scribed along this line and snapped off the engine deck. I glued parts #33 and #34 (air louvers) to their respective sides on the new engine deck. It's a good idea to replace parts #35 and #36 with small pieces of .30 sheet plastic. I set the engine deck on its forward edge and sanded the front portion until it was an even 90 degrees and fit flush against the rear wall of the resin fighting compartment.

The fighting compartment was set on top of the lower hull and aligned with the tranny cover. I glued 2 small strips of sheet plastic along the upper inside edges at the rear of the lower hull to help align the engine deck. I then set the engine deck in position on the lower hull and checked the fit. I got a perfect fit with the engine deck measuring 38.5mm in length. The rear hull plate (part #18) was cleaned up, pin marks filled, and glued to the lower hull.

I added some inspection covers (missing from the Italeri rear plate) with .10 sheet plastic and bolts from a punch and die set for better detail on the rear plate.

The round drain (center of the rear plate) was moved down to touch the brace just below it. The idler housings were shimmed with .10 sheet plastic to get a better fit with the braces on the lower hull sides. The R&J kit includes a nice resin lower rear plate but this is made for the Pz. IV F or G and it wasn't used. The hardest part now was done!

I glued the 8 return roller housings into place on the lower hull sides and slid the resin lower hull side armor into position. The road wheel bogies were assembled per the kit instructions. I like to leave the road wheels, idler and drive wheels off until just before the tracks are installed. I think they are easier to paint this way.

The resin driver's compartment was painted, along with the inside of the lower hull, then glued into place. I opened one hatch on the transmission cover to show off the R&J final drive housing which is all that can be seen once the plate was glued down. The fenders and engine deck were glued on next.

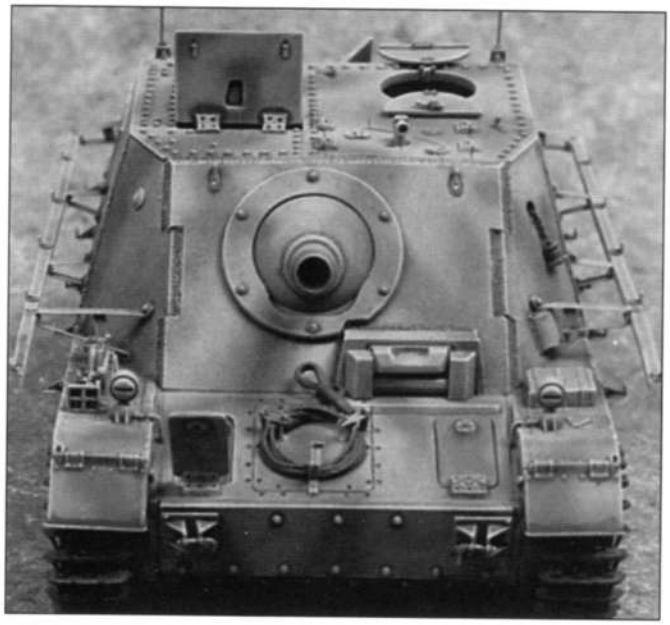
The main gun was drilled out with a 1/8" drill bit and glued into the fighting compartment with its collar. The pistol ports in the fighting compartment were cleaned up with a 3/32" drill bit. The inside of the fighting compartment was painted black. There is lots of room here and it screams for an interior! Small chain (model railroad type) was glued to the backs of the pistol port plugs and to the inside of the fighting compartment. The plugs were slid into their holes on the side armor plate of the fighting compartment. The bolted-on nose armor parts (don't mix these pieces up) now were super glued into position. All the open hatches were masked and the tranny cover and fighting compartment were glued to the hull.

The long muffler was glued onto the rear hull plate and lead foil strip was wrapped around it for the supports. The bolt pattern was removed from the muffler support arms to get a cleaner fit.

The hatches all have separate resin latches. Nifty little things! These were glued to their respective hatches and set aside for paint. The left rear door to the fighting compartment has a pistol port and the plug is slightly different than the two on the superstructure. This plug got the same chain treatment as the others and the plug was put into the door. Several of the hatches received small diameter brass wire bent into the shape of grab handles.

Some detail was added to the model using On-The-Mark PE for the Pz. IV brass wire and Evergreen sheet and rod. The most obvious detail change is the engine air intake shields on each fender. The kit parts were replaced with .10 sheet plastic and ModelKasten wing nuts. Two spare road wheel brackets were made from thin brass rod and super glued onto the rear of the engine deck.

I moved on to the Schurzen rails from On-The-



Above left: the business end. I replaced the kit's headlights and jack with those from the Tamiya Panzer IV tool set. The two cable heads also came from this set. I created the brackets for the cable from OTM brass parts and ModelKasten wing nuts. Above right: on the back end I replaced the thick Italeri engine vent doors (that lay on the fenders) with thinner styrene stock.

Mark at this point. They were assembled per the instructions. This job was somewhat tedious but the results are very nice. The mounting locations on the R&J Brummbär match up just about perfectly. A little fiddling with the pieces and the set was glued onto the model.

The kit headlights were used but some may want to replace them with more accurate Bosch lights from a Tamiya kit. The jack on the right front fender was taken from the Tamiya Panzer IV tool set. The jack block was a resin piece left over from a previous project. The tow cable was made with solder wire and the tow ends taken from the same tool set as the jack. The cable brackets are On-The-Mark PE. All the remaining Italeri parts which are needed were glued on at this time. The R&J tool box was not glued on until after the base coats of paint were finished.

The metal individual link tracks were cleaned up and assembled as continuous runs. Each track run took 97 links. I use a wood fingernail-cuticle stick to bend each of the link jaws into shape. This causes less damage to the soft white metal than a similar metal tool would. The tracks were painted with Humbrol track color. They got a wash of Liquitex raw sienna for a rust effect and a dry brush with gun metal for wear.

Brum-paint

The model and all the separate parts were now ready for paint. The first steps were done with an air brush and the paints were thinned with lacquer. Everything got a primer coat of Floquil gray primer. After this had dried, a base color of Model Master Afrika Korps Tan lightened with flat white was shot on the model, except the tracks. A camouflage pattern of Model Master German red-brown was free-handed with my air brush onto the model.

German markings and a vehicle number from a Tamiya decal sheet were put onto the model to represent a Brummbär of the Sturmpanzer Abteilung 216 at Kursk. Solvaset was used to snuggle the decals to the model. I sealed the decals with a coat of Polly-Scale Satin (water based) brushed over them. The road wheels and return rollers were hand painted with Polly-S grimy black. I waited for several days before moving on to the next painting steps to allow the base colors to cure on the model.

I mixed a dark color wash from Raw Umber oil paint and odorless turpentine and covered the entire model using a broad brush. The running gear got the same treatment. Once the wash had surface dried, I used a fine point brush to pick out the shadow areas of the raised detail. The wash was allowed to completely dry then the model received a coat of Testor Dull-Cote. The muffler and the tow cable were brush painted a dark brown. They were then given a wash of Liquitex water based raw sienna, which looks like rust when dry. I gave this step a day to dry and prepared to dry brush the model.

I proceeded to mix a light creamy color of Windsor Newton oil paint from zinc white and Naples yellow hue. This created the primary color used to dry brush the entire model. It is translucent enough to allow the base colors to show through but still create highlights. The tow cable, drive sprockets and idler wheels were dry brushed with Humbrol gun metal around the wear areas. The oil paint was allowed to dry for 24 hours before a second coat of Dull-Cote was used to cover the entire model. The original dry brush color was lightened even more and the model got a second coat of highlights. A third Dull-Cote application followed. I should mention that I thin the Dull-Cote heavily to allow a number of coats to be air brushed.

The model was now ready for the final assembly sequence. The running gear and tracks were installed. The remaining hatches were glued into place and antennas were added with thin brass wire. A final touch up with light highlights was dry brushed on the fully assembled model and a last application of Dull-Cote was air brushed over the entire model. The model was now finished except for the addition of three tanker figures from the Warriors range of German crew figures.

Teddy-Bär

All in all, I would rate this as a very good model of the Brummbär. I did not experience any fit problems and the quality of the parts was above average. The model was easy to assemble and the finished product LOOKS like an early Brummbär. I've discussed the possibility of including better detail parts (head lights, jack and block) and front tow brackets with the owner of R&J Products. Future kits will have some or all these items included. I am told an interior for the Brummbär is not too far off.

The kit was fun to build and took less time than I normally take to complete a model. Fans of German AFV's will want to include this model in their collection. I intended to be completely honest with my evaluation of the model, for better or worse. With this in mind, I can say I liked this model. If you want to build an accurate Brummbär model, this is the way to go.

—Mark Ford

MMiR RECCE

R&J Products early Brummbär Conversion. Kit #35001. Suggested retail price $34.00.
Italeri Panzer IV F1-G plastic kit #217. Suggested retail price $16.00.
Friulmodellismo Pz. IV E 40cm track set (ATL-01) and Pz. IV E sprocket (AW-04). Suggested retail price $36.00 and $7.00, respectively.
On-The-Mark PE early pattern Brummbär Schurzen rails. Kit #AR-3546. Suggested retail price $23.00.

All kits graciously provided by Rich Sullivan of R&J Enterprises.

References

Achtung Panzer No. 4. Excellent line drawings and photos of the various Brummbärs. Japanese text with English sub-titles.

Kursk 1943, The Tide Turns in the East, by Mark Healy, Osprey Publishing. Several war time photos and short narrative on the Brummbär at Kursk.

Nashorn, Hummel, Brummbär in Action, Armor Number 5, Squadron/Signal Publications. Several good photos.

Conqueror Mk-II

AA's Heavy Monster Of The Midway

All photos by Barry Beaudry

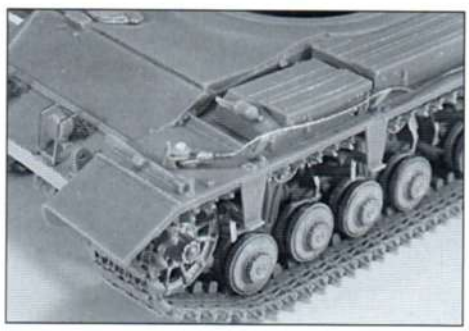
Well, well, well folks, what have those nuts from AA been up to lately? Could it be the sound of heavy metal? You bet it is! Sixth-three scale British tons of fun to make the heart flutter. The Conqueror has finally landed (clankety-clank) on our shores, and believe me kids, it's been worth the wait.

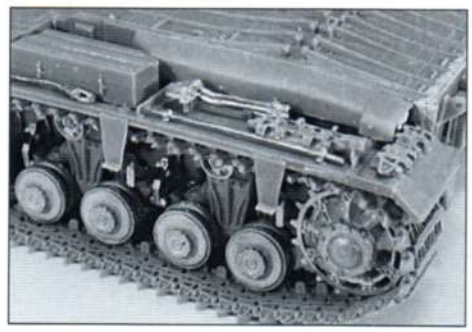
The Conqueror emerged as a direct response to the appearance of the Soviet JS-III. Development of the U.S. M-103 was taking place in concert with the British program. Both nations seemed to fall short of the Soviet talent in producing heavy tanks. The Soviet ability of combining massive firepower, light weight, low silhouette and adequate horsepower to weight ratio was something NATO could not compete with. When one looks at the design of the Conqueror and M-103 you can almost sense the panic the advent of the JS-III caused. The designs of the West were purely reactionary. While the Soviets were creating revolutionary new concepts, the West was feverishly trying to close the gap. Anyone familiar with armor can look at a Conqueror and see the revision of old ideas rather than the creation of new ones. The hull looks very much like a KV one, and the turret resembles a mutated Joe. The suspension looks like the British version of the H.V.S.S., and those tracks look very Tigeresque.

The Conqueror touted a very long 120mm gun and mere 178mm of frontal armor. Weighing in at a rotund combat weight of 66 tons, and powered by an 810hp V-12 gas engine, the conqueror was capable of a blinding top speed of 34 kph. With a range of only 153km, the Conqueror was not the weapon of choice for the modern battlefield.

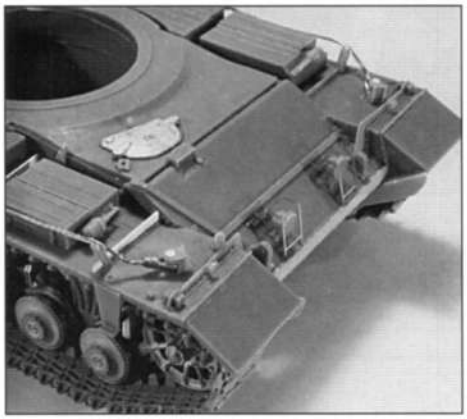
A total of 180 vehicles were produced, with production ending in the late 1950's. Most of the Conquerors served with British forces in Germany. The emergence of the Centurion, along with the Conqueror's poor mechanical reliability record, pretty much left our hefty friend out in the cold, and by 1969 out of service. The only variant that I know to see service was the ARV MK-II (FV222), that's armored recovery vehicle for those not in the know. This will soon be available in kit form from AA. I can hardly wait.

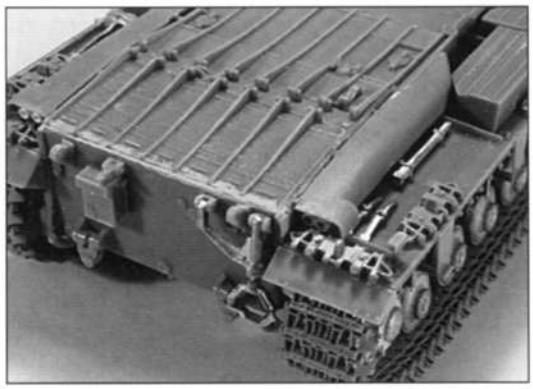
This kit represents a twenty year labor of love for Derek Hanson and company. The castings are superb, with all the fine details rendered in the fashion we have come to expect from AA. The box comes stuffed to the gunwales with a mixture of resin, white metal, P/E, plastic and brass rod, and a length of very nice brass wire to represent the tow



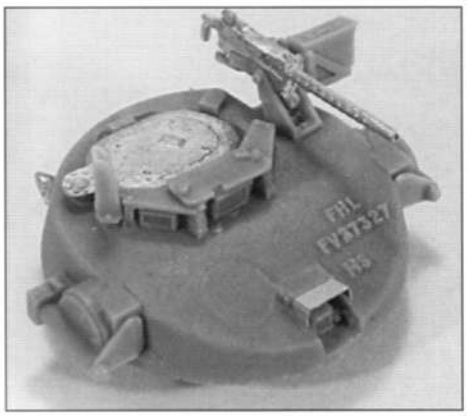


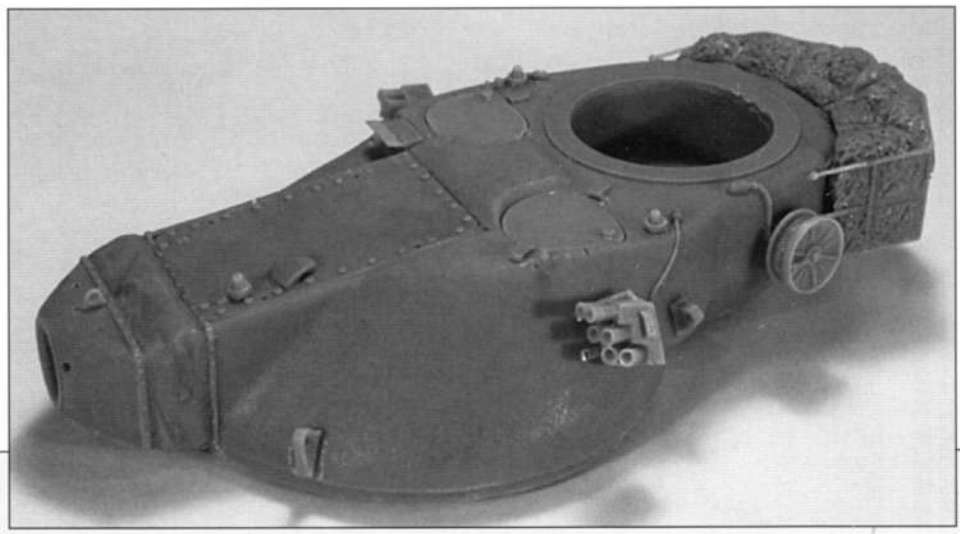
Left and right: two views of the lower hull. The white metal parts are lighter. The suspension is slightly Shermanesque. The tracks are molded in AA's famous plastic looking gray resin. Note the very lovely tow cables also included in the kit.

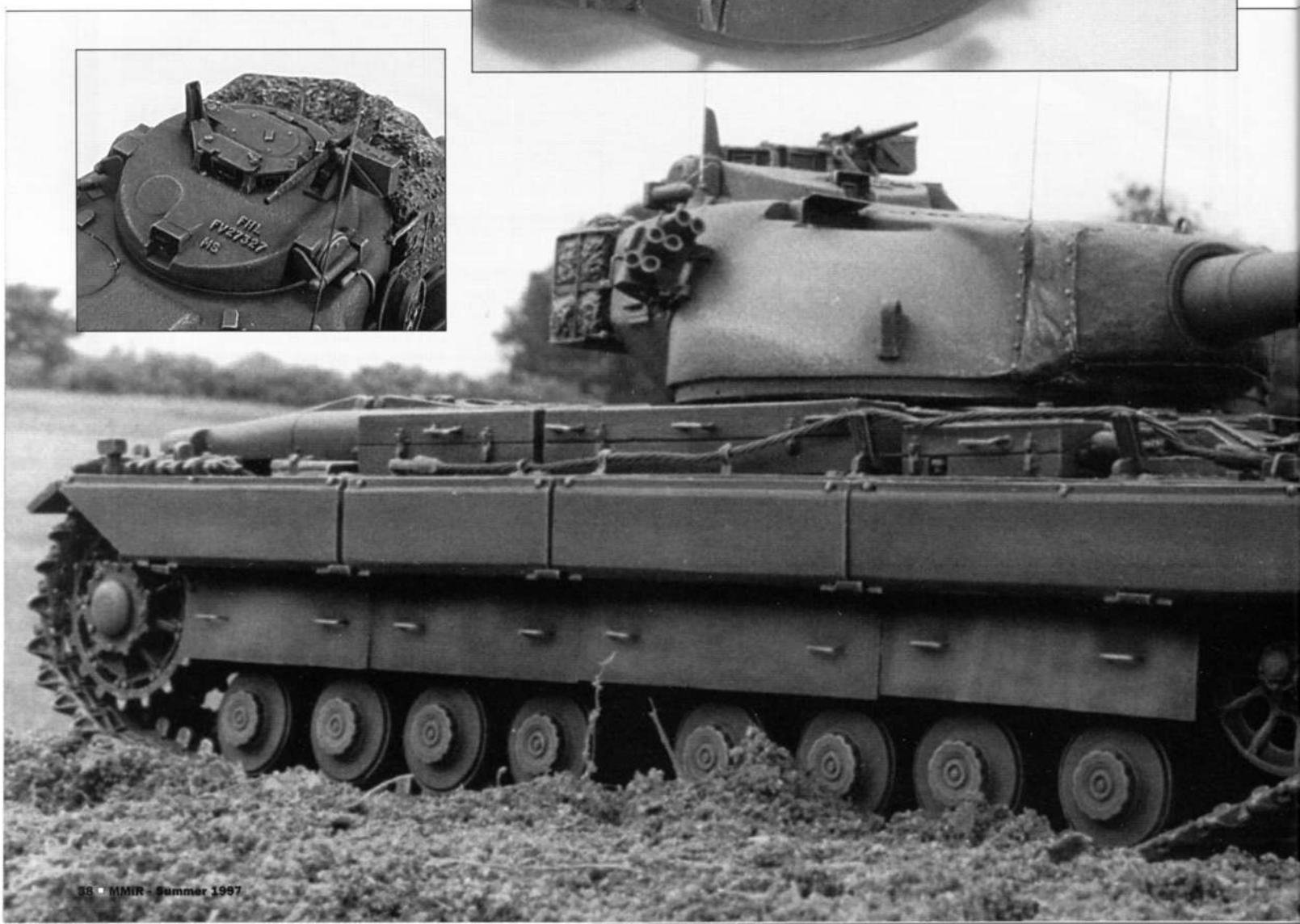




This page, top left: the front end. The brush guards are totally neato with their hidden bend lines. The driver's hatch has a teeny casting mark on the top. Left: the back deck; more AA molding happiness. Below left: the amazing commander's cupola or "why I build these kits." Below: the unpainted turret. I wasn't crazy about the bustle being molded with stowage (in this case, scrim netting), but it was well done. Inset below left: the finished cupola. Lip smacking good! Next page, top inset: a good look at that driver's hatch. Below right and below right inset: the finished turret, the cast texture and turret bustle being evident. Brave modelers can form their own empty version of the bustle from brass wire.



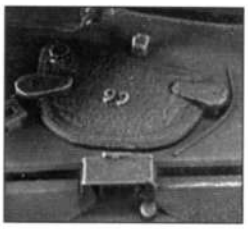




cables. The instructions are very clear and concise, with a spattering of very subtle British humor. Nothing like a little levity to break things up.

Assembly

I began construction by joining the upper and lower hull sections. There were two hefty plugs at the front and rear of the upper hull, which required some careful sanding. The fit was pretty good, but filling will be necessary. This was the hardest part of the whole project. An alternative location for these nasty buggers would have been nice. In addition, some of the details on our sample (i.e. fender supports) were broken off and had to be replaced using a thin styrene sheet.

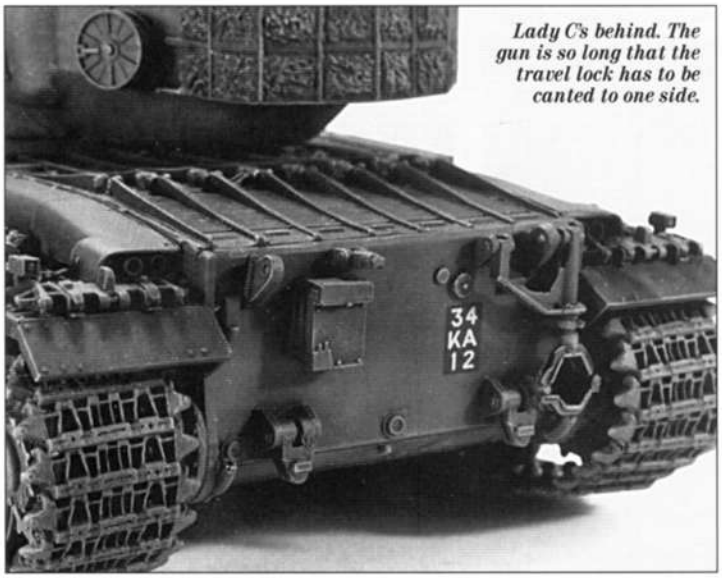


The suspensions mounting brackets were mounted to their appropriate location points. I mounted the road wheels to the spring units using a length of track as a guide: two per spring, just like a Sherman. While everything was drying I attached the return rollers. Mounting the bogie pairs was very easy. With the model upside down, I inserted the bogie pairs into the suspension mounting brackets and gently flipped the whole thing over onto a flat surface, where it was possible to tack them in place. Once I was satisfied with everything, I flipped it back over and gave them their final dose of super glue.

The idler mounts, hanger brackets, bump stops, and the other lower hull details were added. Be careful of the directions of the bump stops. These are used to restrict the travel of the bogie pairs. The suspension on this beast looks tricky, but is really very easy, once you get going. The tracks are link and length and are cast in an attractive gray resin. Clean up was minimal and the construction was very easy. The detail and quality of the casting was exceptional. An eye dropper and boiling water was used to tweak the lengths into final position. With the tracks installed, I started to get a feel for just how big this baby really is.

Adding the details to the upper hull was straight forward. I deviated a bit here in that the P/E handles for the tool boxes were too small for my big mitts to properly clean up. I replaced these with brass wire. Some of the tiny resin parts like E and F were total insanity. Beware, they will get airborne. To me the highlight was the brass cable. Once annealed, it can be bent and twisted to give a very realistic looking tow cable. Someone needs to bag this stuff. *[actually they have, see MMiR #11-12 Short Takes—Ed]*

The drivers hatch can be positioned either opened or closed. The main gun travel lock can be mounted in either an up or down position. If you decide to model it down, parts Z and X are a clasp assembly to hold part U to the rear of the vehicle. The P/E brush guards are stunning with all the bend lines being on the correct side.



Lady C's behind. The gun is so long that the travel lock has to be canted to one side.

Ta-Ta Turret:

This is the focal point of the whole model. The cast texture is rendered beautifully, including some very cool casting numbers which, unfortunately, will be covered if you decide to use the storage bustle. The sculpting of the canvas mantlet cover looks very convincing. Again the molder can position the hatches open or closed. A nice inclusion would have been some fresh UK type tankers.

The bustle rack is giant casting representing a basket full to the brim with a camo net. Not being a big fan of mold on stowage, I really contemplated making a new one out of brass. Being that this is a kit review I opted to go with what's in the box. Once painted and weathered the end result looks pretty convincing. I just didn't want to cover those beautiful casing numbers. Oh well.

The main gun is a three piece affair which went together just fine. However, on our sample, the end piece was warped. I tried to straighten it by dropping it in boiling water and rolling it, but this proved unsuccessful. I believe this was due to the metal rod, which was cast inside, not being cast concentric. A/A sent us a replacement and everything was fine. The remaining turret details were added without a hitch. I replaced the grab handle on the right side with brass wire, as well as the ones on the side skirts, then set them aside until painting. All in all, a real easy build, as far as multi media kits go.

Paint

The model was finished using Xtra-color deep bronze green X814. This gave the model that post war semi-gloss look. You can use your own judgment here. No markings were provided in the kit so I used some of A/A's excellent waterside decals, which are sold separately. They are a little pricey, but if you're going to do Brit stuff, there are enough included to last a long time.

The bridging circle was sprayed from a circle template and the number is a decal. I think the number should be 80 not 70. Of course, I found that out after the model was finished.

Conclusions

This kit was a real joy to build and, when complete, is one hunka hunka resin. The Conqueror has always been one of my favorites, so I'm very glad to finally see it on the market. I can hardly wait to see the ARV version. What can I say, folks? The model speaks for itself. Enjoy!

—Nick Vanston

MMiR RECCE

Conqueror Heavy Tank Mk-II. Kit number K28. Kit graciously provided by the manufacturer. Suggested retail approximately $125.00.

References

The Vickers Tanks, from Landship to Challenger by Christopher F. Foss and Peter Mackensy, Patrick Stephens 1988. A good reference for all lovers of British armor.

My own photos taken at Bovington Tank Museum.

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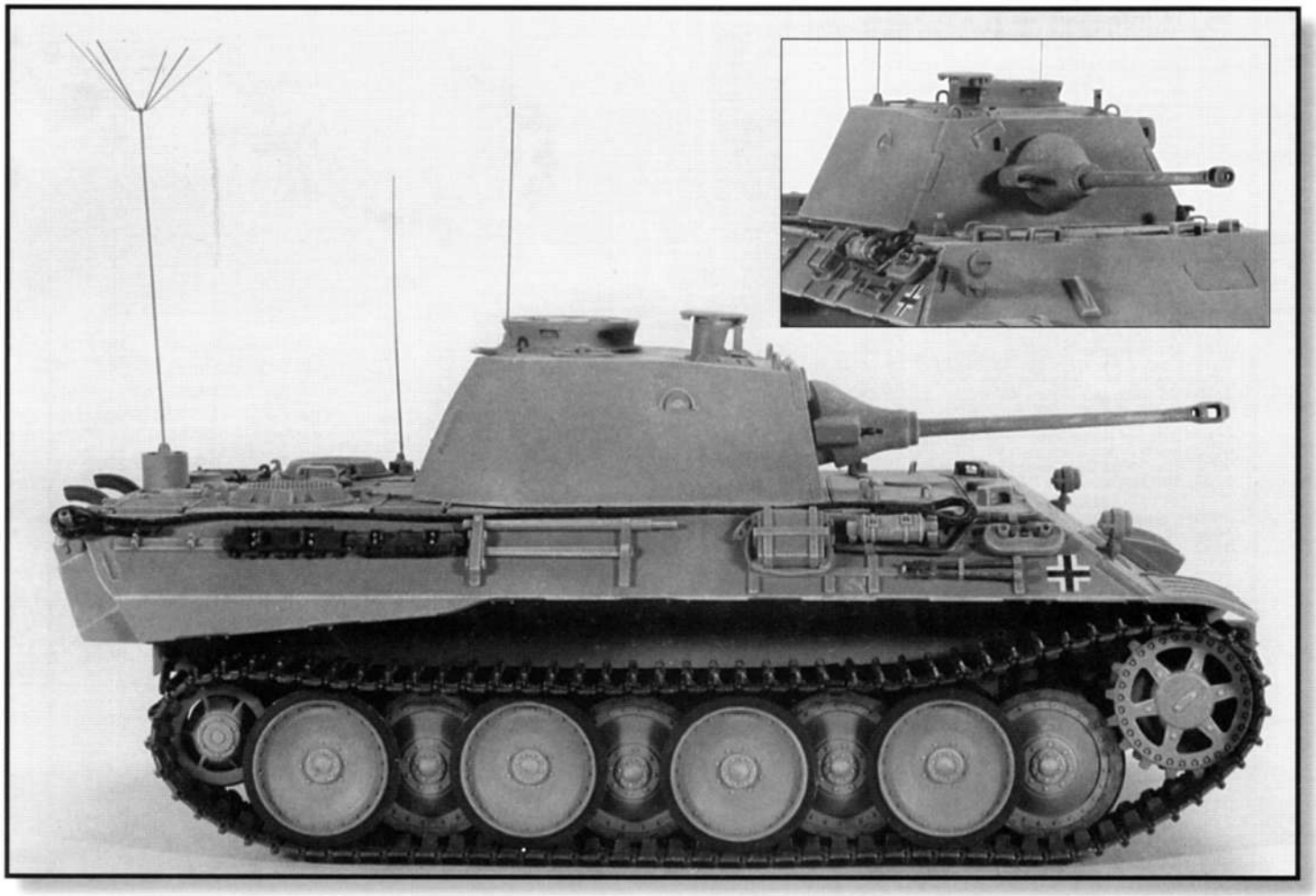
Rockin' to the Beobach

Chesapeake's Panther Beobachtungswagen



All photos by Joe Morgan

Another in the recent spate of WWII German science fiction, or 'proposed variants,' if you prefer, is this nicely done artillery observation Panther with 50mm gun. (Another proposal without the gun is available as CMD 17B, while this is CMD 17E.)

This is designed to mount to the Italeri Ausf D. Parts are provided by CMD to backdate the "A" model, or you can just start with the "D" model now available.

Interestingly, the vehicle was proposed at the time of the Ds production, but it never did get produced or fielded. I'm curious to know where CMD got its information, as the one drawing I found (the Spielberger book) showed only the simplest rendition of the turret and this was in the form of a recon vehicle.

I won't go into the pros and cons of the Italeri kit, or discussions of its weak points (which include poor fit in some major parts, and the infuriating practice of putting molding punch marks on the visible side of parts when they could just as easily go on the other side). However, the resin turret conflicts with the driver's/radio operator's hatches and the raised areas next to the forward engine deck grilles. Maximum traverse is about thirty degrees because of the hatch problem, and the areas next to the grilles need to be removed to allow the turret to sit flat. There would be no conflict with hatches or grilles with the flat-deck "G" model, and the Tamiya kit is much nicer.

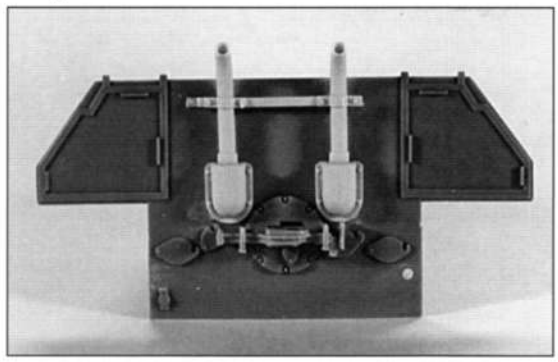
Hull Construction

First, the rear hull plate needs to be backdated to the "D" model. CMD supplies parts to fix the exhausts, consisting of one exhaust shroud/pipe to match the Italeri part, and correct exhaust brace and clamps. These work quite well and go into place easily. There's no mention, however, in CMD's plans about the jack. This is the other part of backdating the "A" to the "D"; the jack must be stowed horizontally rather than vertically.

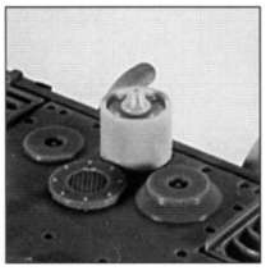
I used both a jack and the jack stowage clamps from a Tamiya accessory package to do this.

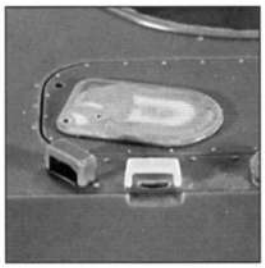
The other part of backdating the hull is concerned with the front plate. The machine gun mount should be the 'letterbox' type; CMD provides the inner part of the mount, unnecessary if you're building it with the flap closed, but I had no flap. I'm not sure if this is supposed to be provided with the CMD conversion, but it was no big deal, as the Italeri "D" comes with two.

The radio operator needs a forward periscope, too, and this is provided by CMD. A little carving needs to be done on the top lip of the glacis plate to accommodate this; just match to the cutout in the lip for the driver's periscope (this should be 18.5mm from the outside corner and 6.5mm wide, as per the Italeri "D" instructions). You may want to cut an

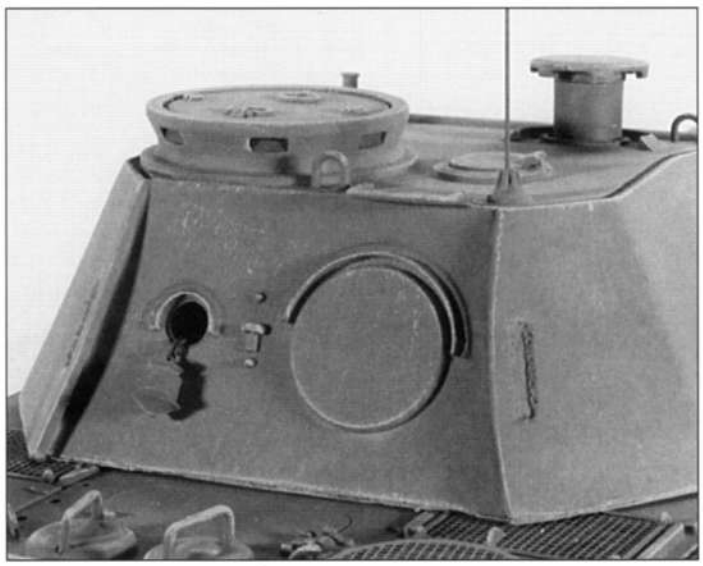


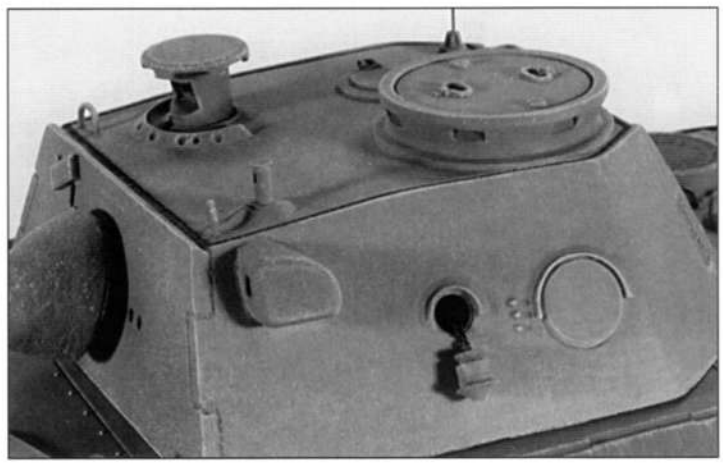
Backdated Italeri engine deck. The CMD exhaust brackets and one exhaust to match the Italeri 'one pipe' exhaust are apparent. Below is the Tamiya jack and its brackets to complete the backdating.





Sequence of four at left: the radio pot for the crow's foot antenna on the engine deck; the gunner's periscope guard with slot cut from the lip of the glacis. Note the filling necessary on the Italeri driver's glacis hatch; an assembled pistol port, before insertion into the turret; pistol port inside. The piece of styrene can be adjusted up or down to show more or less chain on the outside. Below left: rear turret close-up. Note pistol port dangling from chain. The strange shape of the cupola is shown here. Below: left side turret. The bulge on the turret side is for one side of the range finder. The spotting scope in the up position is on the left front corner and the big sight is on the other side.





opening in the hull top to match the others; I did. Now glue on the CMD guard. A headlight for the right side is also provided, another 'backdate' feature.

Now build the rest of the Italeri kit minus the turret. You'll find, among other things, that the kit tracks are way too long, but are fine once you tie them or glue them down to reproduce the correct sag. My only deviation from the kit was to use a set of On the Mark engine deck screens with Grandt Line bolts at each corner on the square openings. (The forward bolts conflicted with the turret and went the way of the upstanding guards on each side of the grilles; ground right off.) CMD provides the armored "pot" mount for the crow's foot antenna.

Turret

The turret is the main attraction of this conversion, and CMD does their usual very nice work. First to go together were the pistol ports. I glued one into the turret, and did the other two to hang outside by their chains. The piece of wire provided to attach the chain at each end was much too heavy. When I tried to follow the instructions and bend the wire using the chain it broke the delicate links. I went to my spares for some light copper wire, and this did the job. Cut a piece of the provided sheet styrene about 10mm long and drill a hole in the middle to accept the wire. Drill a corresponding hole in the pistol port's back side. Run the wire through the end links and glue into the holes. Then slip the bit of styrene in through the portholes in the turret sides and glue in place, adjusting up or down to get the right amount of chain outside the turret. When done, these work just like the real thing; just close 'em up when you paint, then poke 'em back out to dangle convincingly!

I glued the other hatches in closed positions, as there's no turret interior. These included the communications port on the turret left side, the escape hatch on the rear which is the Italeri part, and the port on the top next to the cupola. The cupola is a unique design to this variant; it's sort of an inverted bell shape that is smaller at the bottom than at the top. It and its hatch are a perfect fit, as are the rest of the turret parts.

The T.B.F. 2 sight sticks up out of the top of the turret on the right side. CMD provides the clear plastic to make the lens in it; the part must be painted first and then installed to keep errant paint from this clear area. As per the CMD instructions the angled mirror was painted gloss black, then the lens was glued in using white glue. The rest, along with its hatch, got a coat of the base color. Nothing tells you, by the way, just how the hatch is supposed to appear if the sight is in the up position. Since no hinges were apparent, I figured the hatch sat right on top of the sight like a hat. It looked right when I finished, anyway.

The turret has a bulge on the left side to cover one side of a range finder. The other side is covered by a hatch in the turret front plate. I glued this open. A spotting periscope in on the turret roof left side, opposite the sight. Since the sight was up, I glued this up, too.

The gun and mantlet gave me some trouble. The instructions state "The 50mm gun should be pushed into the gun mantlet far enough that the tapered portion of the gun is completely exposed." Well, try as I might, I couldn't get this to happen, and I couldn't get any kind of tool down into the mantle to do any cleaning so this could happen. The muzzle brake was also a problem. You only get one shot with super glue, ya know, and while I got the front part right, the back was horribly misaligned. This was my fault for paying more attention to one end than the other, but resulted in me cutting off the back end and substituting some tubing for it. As suggested by the plans, I glued some sprue into the turret to be the machine gun barrel; the outer part is supplied by Chesapeake.

CMD provides wire for the antenna on the turret roof as well as the crow's foot. The wire is cut to the right length. I would suggest drilling the mounts for the wire as I did. The regular antenna on the back deck was made from sprue.

Last in the CMD plans were the fender extensions. I didn't intend to use these, but dry fitted them from curiosity, and found I had two rights. Bill Miley quickly sent me the others, so I had them if I wanted them.

Conclusion

If you like to build this kind of projected, never built, prototype thing (I really do!), this is a superior conversion. Except for a couple of niggling things that might've been all my fault, fit and finish were outstanding. The finished product, in line with several other Panthers in my display case, looks good, and very different with the little gun barrel, the big sight, the range finder bulge, and the odd cupola.

—Joe Morgan

MMiR RECCE

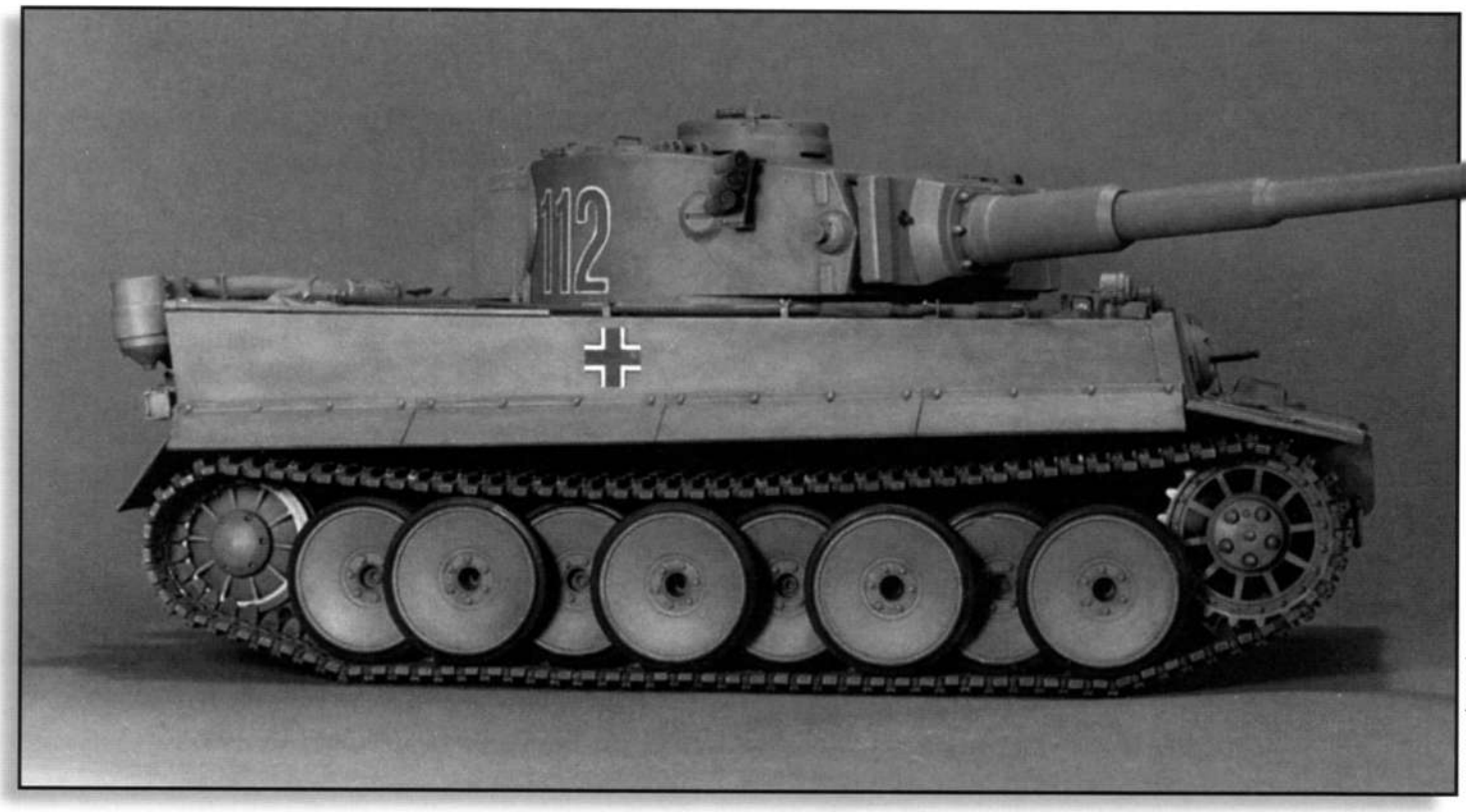
Chesapeake Model Designs Panther Beobachtungswagen turret. Kit number CMD 17E. Suggested retail price $37.00. Kit graciously provided by the manufacturer. Used in conjunction with Italeri kit number 285.

References

Being that the nature of this tank is more or less pure conjecture, I really didn't consult any of my reference library beyond checking on basic Panther detail unrelated to the conversion. The subject is briefly touched upon in the Spielberger Panther book, but not the version depicted by CMD.

Big and Bandai

Taking on the ancient large scale Tiger I kit



All photos by Brent Nelson

Many large scale armor modelers may be surprised to find that this kit has been on the market for quite some time. In fact it was on the market even before VP's final production version Tiger I. Bandai's kit gives you the opportunity to build the early version of the tank. I had hoped that VP would release a backdate set for their kit, but it apparently is not to be.

Now Bandai has recently released this and because it's injection molded it can be had for considerably less money that its resin counterpart. Construction of this kit is not much different in this scale than it is in 1/35th.

That's the good news. The bad news is that although the VP kit is super detailed right out of the box, the Bandai kit is not. And being originally a radio controlled model it lacks much of the finer detail that armor freaks (that's you and me) crave.

The kit which was built fort this article is of the first production run from Bandai. Like many large-scale kits, it was owned by other armor modelers who swapped it for other kits (at one time it was really hard to find these items, so they were passed around quite a bit). As a result some of the refinements seen in the photos were made prior to my owning it. For example, the road wheels were turned on lathe and cast copies were made, the barrel was turned from Plexiglas, and the drive sprockets were detailed with new heads and a new center hub. All this was done by a modeler named Jim Kohmar. This work was up to my standards so it was all used for my build-up.

Start 'em up

And so this brings us to the start of my part of the story. I'll just run it down blow by blow as I moved around the model. The construction notes are keyed to the photo so that you can follow along.

The front end got the treatment first and I began by texturing the bow MG mount by brushing liquid cement onto the surface and stippling it with a stiff short-bristled brush. **(Figure 1)**

The retaining fasteners used to hold the MG waterproof cover were built using styrene rod, stretched sprue, Grandt-Line rivets and wings nuts (these are copies of those found on the VP Kübelwagen). On the original kit these were molded-on and they were way out of scale. The kit supplied bow MG was replaced with the more accurate VP item.

All of the clamps that hold down the vehicles tools were made with annealed .005" brass sheet, styrene rod, rivets and copper wire. As many of you may know, annealing is the process of heating the brass with an open flame until it is red hot, then plunging it into cold water. This retains the strength of the material, but makes it pliable enough to work with. Each of the clamps consists of seven individual pieces. The front mud guard stiffeners also were made from the annealed brass stock.

I replicated the torch cut edges of the front plates by scribing the plastic with a tapered bit in a Dremel tool.

The front transmission plates were detailed with rivet castings and sheet stock. **(all Figure 1)**

Along the sides of the tank I used Grandt-Line rivets to detail the tops of the mudguards. The brackets which hold the track cable have round stubs where they should have bolts, so I replaced them with bolt castings. **(Figure 6)**

Relaxing on the deck

The back engine deck and the rear armor plate received most of the detail on the model. Here's what I did.

On the back plate I added the exhaust housings from the VP kit detailed with an application of Green putty and liquid cement stippled to create a cast texture. The exhaust stacks came from the VP kit. They were a little too tall to match the Bandai kit, so a small section was cut out of each and the joint filled and sanded.

The heat shields for the exhaust were detailed in several places. I added the bottom flange from .30 stock and then added bolt castings to it. I added the rim at the top of each shield from plastic strip.

The remote starting plate was taken from the VP kit, as were the jack, the towing shackles and the rear towing lug. The rear towing lug is detailed with stock and my scratch built castle nuts added to the top. These are made by slotting a Grandt-Line rivet around its edge with a razor saw, then placing a

small piece of rod in the center. A mold was made and the castings are used on this model. The jack was detailed with brass, plastic stock and wing nuts. The starter plate was modified to represent the early type.

The rear mud guards, as supplied, were pretty plain. I scribed better defined part lines into them and added some wing nuts.

Because it started life as a remote control model, the Bandai kit has a big hole in the center of the back plate. This is where the remote control unit plugged in. I turned a resin disk on my lathe to match the hole, then filled and sanded it to match. I also turned a new starter access cover to fit over this area—again from resin stock. **(all Figure 2)**

Back up on top of the deck there is a lot of action. I textured the cast pieces of the decks using the putty method described above.

The Fieffel and snorkel cover received quite a bit of attention. The casting numbers and letters on the snorkel cover were made by using the ID numbers from the kit's sprues. The piece of plastic with the numbers on it was placed face up on a piece of fine sandpaper and sanded until all that was left were the numbers. Tedious but effective.

I then applied liquid cement to the cover and carefully applied the numbers with a sharp X-acto. More liquid cement was applied to seal them into place.

The hinge for the snorkel cover was made from sprue and Grandt-Line bolt heads.

On the Fieffel, I detailed the connection of the tubes with more Grandt-Line stuff and the air cleaner bracket also got the same treatment. I covered the hoses with fabric Christmas ribbon to give them a more realistic texture. It looks rather festive in the photos, doesn't it?

The hose clasps were made from anneale .005" brass, styrene rod, copper wire and Grandt-Line rivets.

The large frames for the main air intakes were fabricated from strip styrene. The 45 degree miter cuts were made on "The Chopper," that cool model railroad tool that makes dozens of repetitive cuts. If you do a lot of scratch building, this thing is a must. The screen was taken from the Bandai kit.

The hinges for the engine latches were made from strip styrene, while the latches were taken from the VP kit. **(all Figure 3)**

Tooling around

All the tools used on my model came from the VP late Tiger. I detailed many of the individual components, such as the fire extinguisher, the shovel holder and the tool box, and all the clasps were made as described at the top of the article.

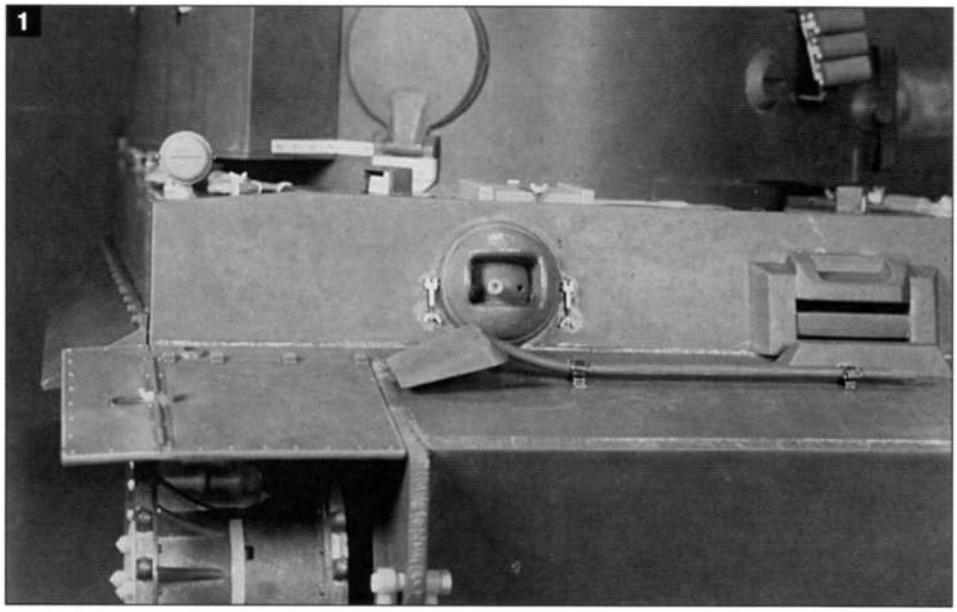
I also detailed the clamps for the tow cables, which were taken from the VP kit (again).

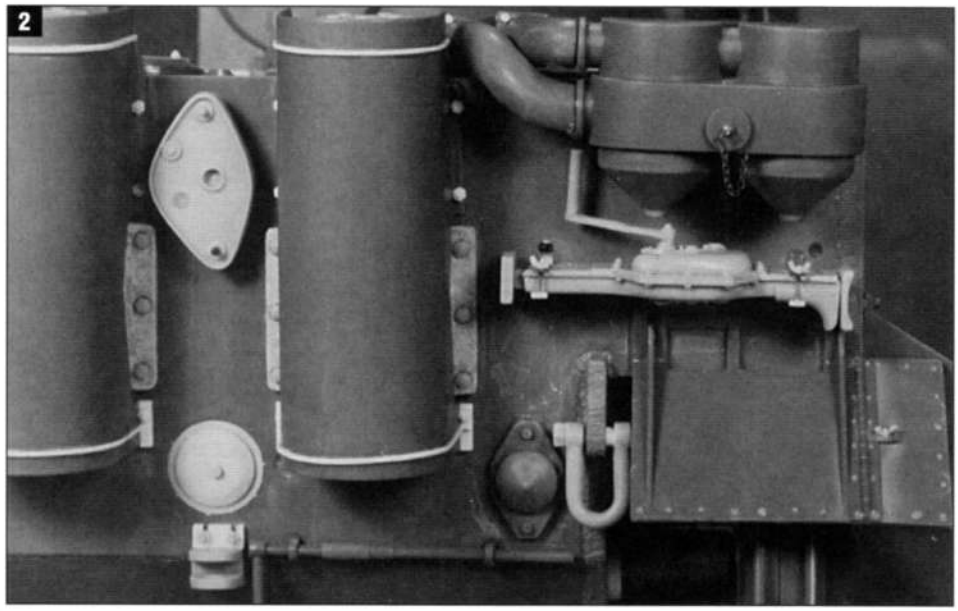
The gun cleaning rods were made from small diameter styrene tube with rod inserts.

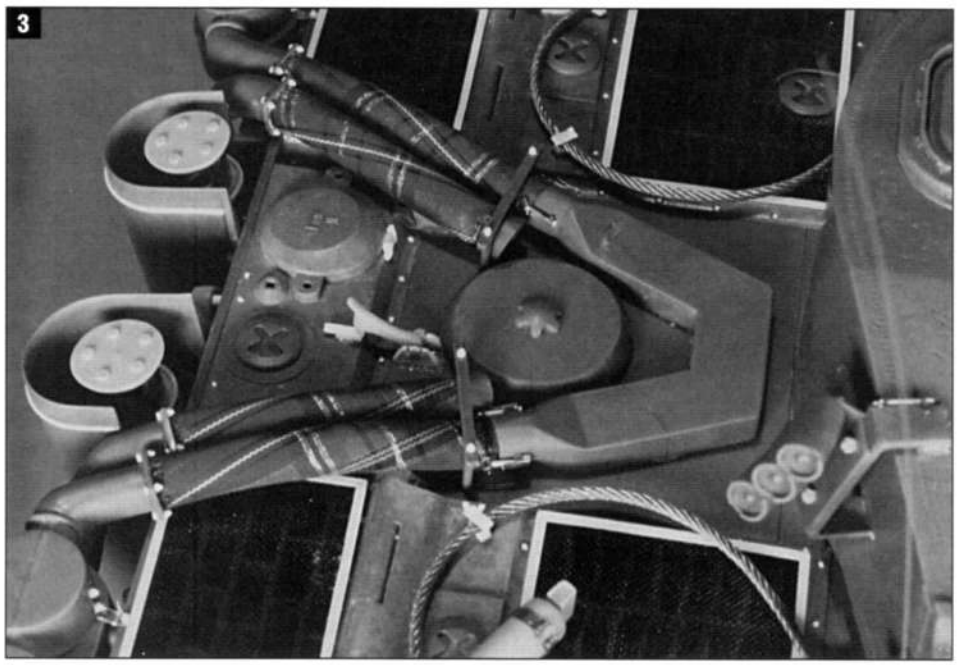
The early Tunisian Tiger had dual headlights mounted on either corner of the front hull. None came with the kit, so I used copies of the VP light and created the conduit point on my lathe. A drilled out Grandt-Line rivet was added to the side. The conduit is insulated wire bent to shape. I added the retaining strap for the black-out light to the back of each. **(Figures 4 and 8)**

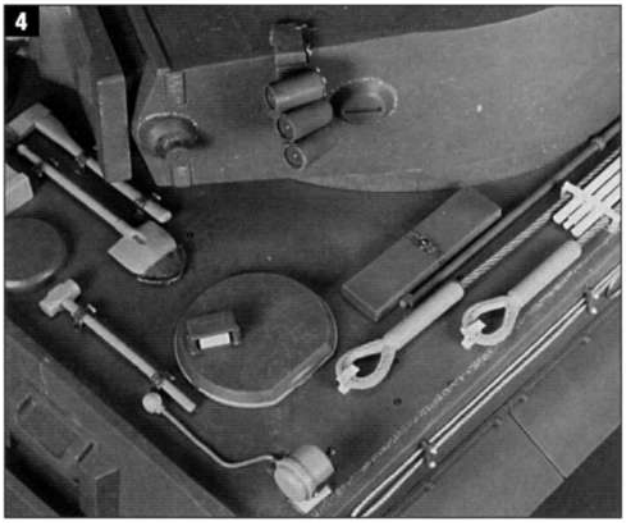
Wheels and tracks

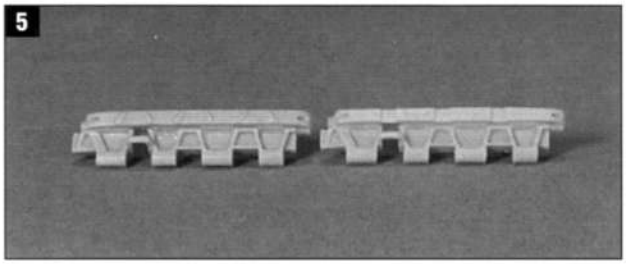
The kit tracks were bad news, so I decided to replace them with copies made from a modified VP track. The VP tracks are the late type with the ice cleat and were lacking the vertical grooves.

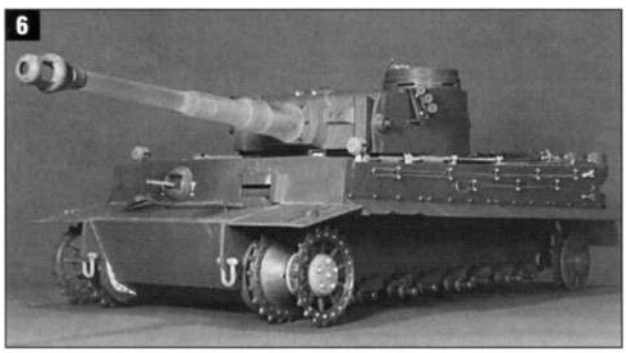


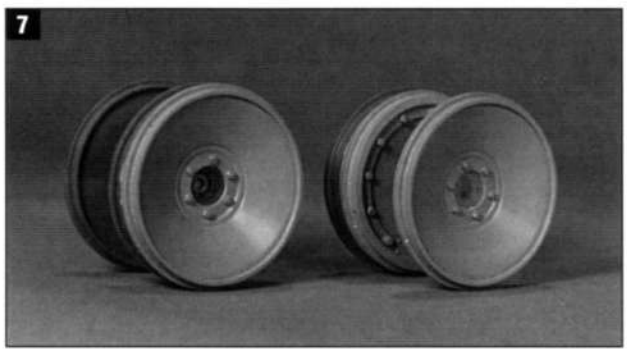








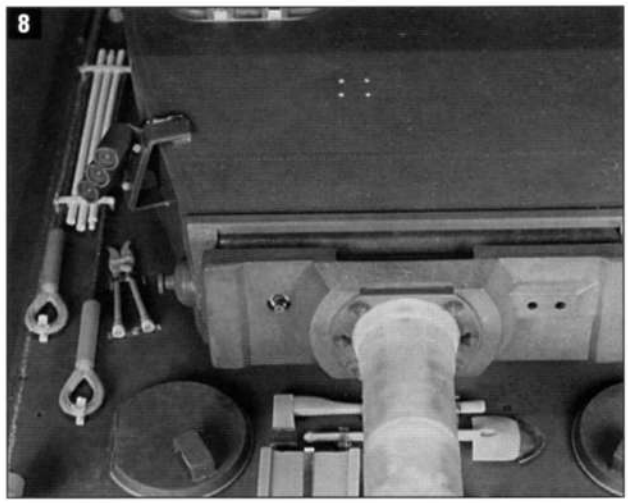




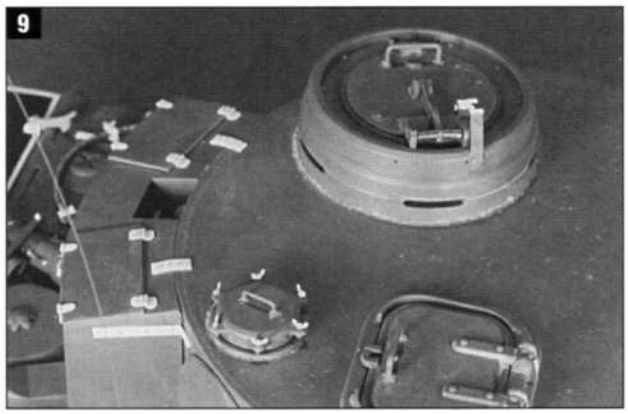
I sanded off the cleats and cut the grooves into the face using my vise and milling attachment for my lathe. Rather than make copies (which I should have done), I milled each link of two complete sets. Whew! **(Figure 5)**

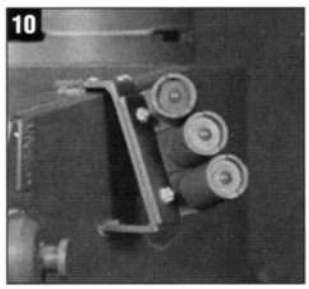
In order to incorporate the new tracks, a couple of modifications needed to be made to the suspension. Because the VP tracks are correct in scale and therefore wider, resin spacers were cut on the lathe and inserted between the sprocket halves and in back of the idler wheels.

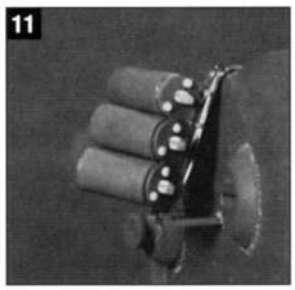
While I was at it, I created new hubs for the drive sprockets on the lathe. The Bandai hubs were, in a word, horrible. **(Figure 6)**



The Bandai kit supplies rather unique two-piece roadwheels, each with a separate tire. I felt that the wheels themselves were very much lacking in detail so I created new ones by turning resin stock on my lathe and milling table. The centers were detailed with Grandt-Line bolts and after casting I added the tire to each finished wheel. **(Figure 7)**







Turret

The turret received much the same basic treatment as the rest of the kit. I created the torch-cut edges of the armor, casting numbers and textured areas as described before. I also added weld beads where appropriate. To do this, I laid down a bead of thick super glue and then sprayed it with accelerator before it has a chance to spread out. The hardened glue is then cut with a tapered bit mounted in a Dremel tool set at a very high RPM. The area is then scrubbed with a Scotch-Brite pad to remove the fuzz caused by the cutting process. This method was used through the entire model.

The screw heads in the turret roof were done by drilling the appropriate sized hole in the roof and then inserting slotted styrene rod into the openings (I use a razor blade to cut the slot). A drop of glue is applied to the underside of each. **(Figure 8)**

In addition to the added weld beads, the commander's cupola was further detailed with a hatch spring made from copper wire. This was wrapped around the shaft for the hatch pivot. The latching mechanism was made with small bits of strip styrene and bolt castings. **(Figure 9)**

One of the less obvious and most overlooked details of the Tiger's drum cupola are the small water drainage holes located around its circumference. I use a bit mounted in a pine vise for this.

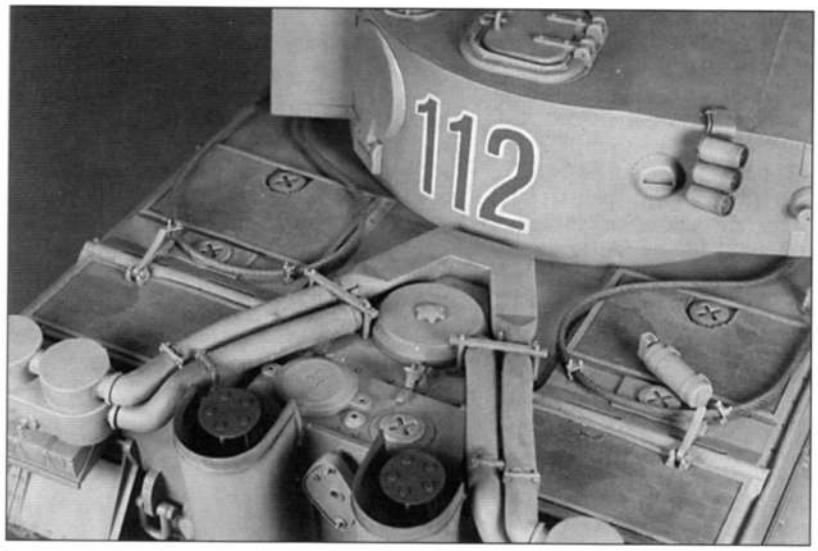
The hinge for the big escape hatch on the rear of the turret is wrong, so a new one was fabricated from laminated styrene sheet and bolt heads.

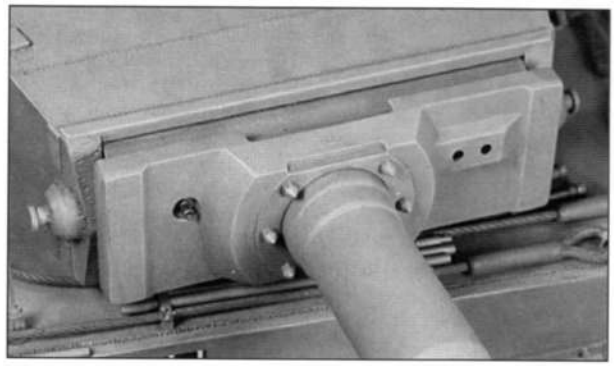
The wing nuts for the turret ventilator housing filter were way out of scale on the Bandai kit. I replaced them with copies made from VP wing nuts.

The rear stowage bin was extensively detailed using strip styrene and brass stock. **(all Figure 9)**

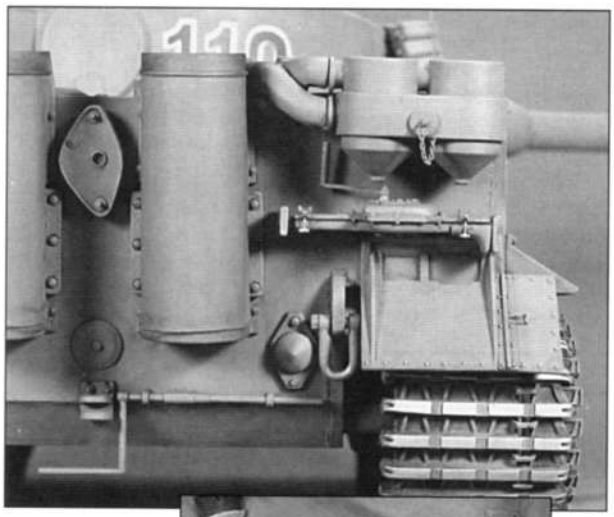
The smoke discharger tubes mounts on either side of the turret were seriously in need of detail. The bracket on which they are mounted actually contains a second plate to which the tubes are mounted. The kit part is molded as one big part, so I used a panel scriber to scribe around the edge of the plate to make it appear as two separate pieces. **(Figure 10)**

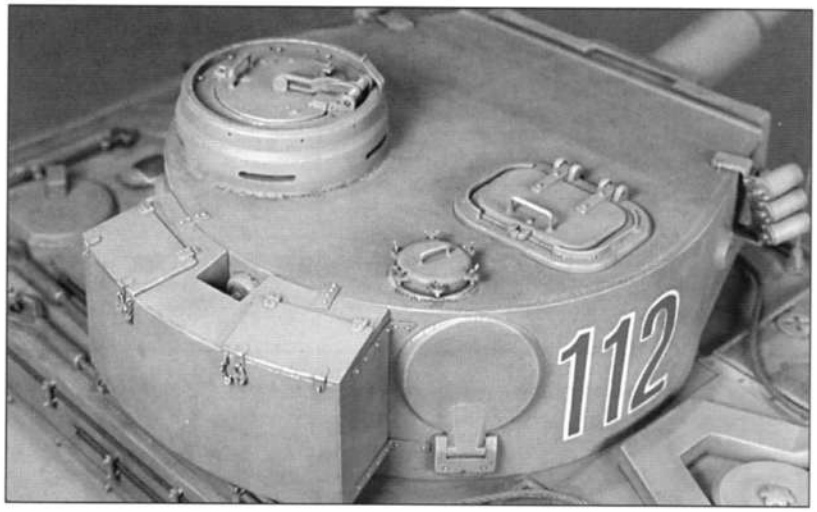
The electrical plugs were made with strip styrene cut in the Chopper. They were shaped by cutting the edges with an X-acto knife and a sanding stick. Holes were drilled in the ends and lengths of copper wire inserted. Stretched sprue and .005" strip were used for the rest of the detail. The bolts are Grandt-Line. The copper wire is secured to the discharger brackets with lead foil. **(Figure 11)**

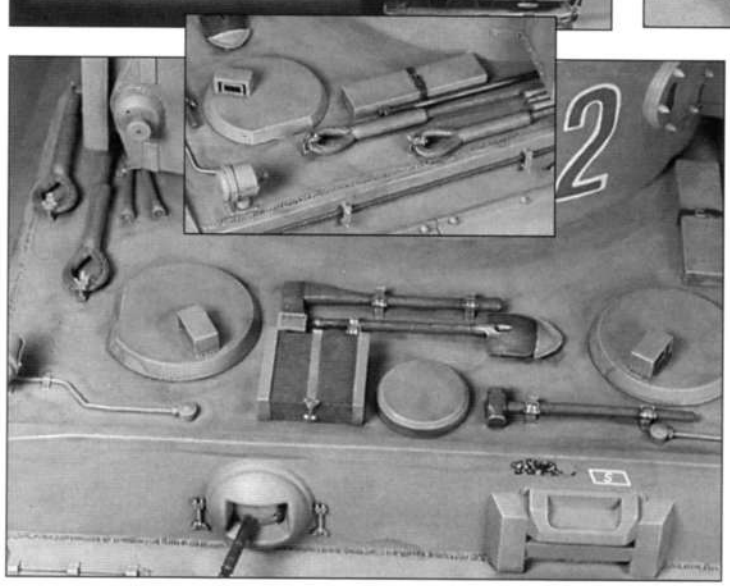


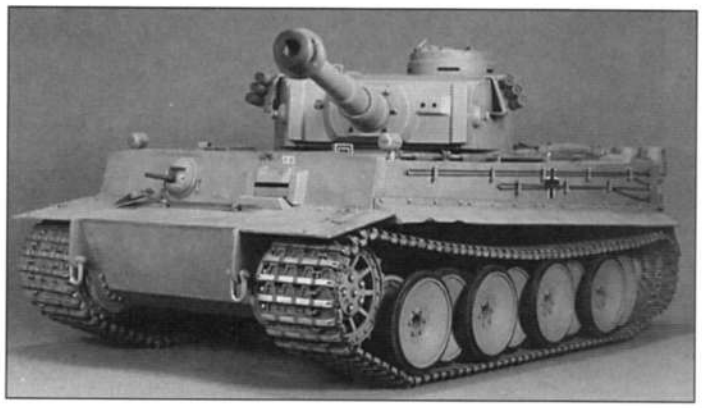


This page: the fruits of my labor. It's a pleasure to work in a scale where everything you do is so obvious! Left: the back deck. If you look closely, you can see the texture of the ribbon used to wrap the hoses. Above right: the mantlet, showing off some of my weld bead and torch cut effects. Below left: the back end with the fully detailed jack and Fieffel canisters. Note the realistic sheen of the tracks, obtained with the "Silver Pen" method. Below right: the turret roof. A lot of work here all right. The cupola received a good amount of attention as did the ventilator cover. Thank God for VP wing nuts! Also from VP are the markings seen all over the kit; from their 1/15th dry transfer sheet. Below left and inset: the tool suite on the front. Below right: on the prowl!









Painting and Weathering

To paint my Tiger, I used Testor Master Africa Mustard #195. This color is the closest I could find to matching the color used on German armor serving in Africa. For reference I used the Ryton book on the Tiger I, in particular the painting on page 144.

The problem is that #195 only comes in a spray can (why is that?). And as most of you know, you really can't control the flow of paint from a spray can.

So to get at the paint I had to do something that I recommend you **NEVER** do. First I turned the can upside down and sprayed until all the propellant was expelled. Very little if any paint comes out when you do this, because the propellant tends to rise to the top of the can and when inverted both the propellant and the bottom of the feed tube are at the bottom. A small hole was then drilled in the bottom edge of the can and the paint was drained out. *This method is super dangerous, so I do not suggest you try it.*

To paint the model I use a Paasche VL double-action airbrush. I set the brush to spray a very light coat of paint. I prefer several very light coats which ensures no runs or drips. This method is more time consuming and in the case of this large model it took the better part of two hours. The paint was sprayed as it came from the can because it was already thinned from spraying.

After the base coast was dry to the touch, cloud pattern was sprayed over the model. The base color was lighted with Humbrol Matte #72 for this. The purpose of the cloud pattern is to give the impression that the vehicle's paint is fading. The paint was

sprayed on the corners of the hull, the turret and the top of the barrel in wide bands and also the road wheels.

After the base color was dry (overnight), the entire model was given a coat of dull varnish (Pratt and Lambert #38) thinned 50/50. The model was set aside to dry for two days. The dull varnish is applied to seal the Testor paint because it will not withstand any kind of wash of either turpentine or thinner. The model was washed with Grumbacher artist turpentine and Windsor & Newton Raw Umber oil paint. I worked in small sections at a time to prevent streaks

The wash was left on for about 30 seconds, then dabbed with a cotton T-shirt. When the wash was complete, the model was again set aside to dry overnight.

The model was then drybrushed with Humbrol Matte #93, plus #34 White. This was done two more times, each time adding a little more white to the mixture. I allowed a full night's drying time between each step to prevent the different coats of paint from leaching into one another causing irreparable damage.

The final dry brush run is done with silver decorative pen ink (found in art stores, the pens are disposable and have ink in them already) and Raw Umber oil paint. The ink is removed by pressing the pen onto a paper palette.

This mixture is very lightly applied to all areas which would receive high wear. Very little paint is left on the brush for this and the effect is very subtle. It gives a metallic sheen that is only visible when the light hits it just right, but the effect is highly realistic.

I used this same mixture thinned with turps and applied it with a 00 brush to any areas where I thought the paint would chip down to bare metal, such as the hatches, latches, hinges and anywhere paint might chip. You have to be careful when doing this, because a little goes a long, long way.

The tracks were assembled into sections to make painting easier. They were sprayed with Humbrol Matte #29 (Dark Earth) and lightened with Humbrol Matte #34 (White). After drying, they were washed with an extra dirty looking wash of turps and raw umber. After that was dry, they were drybrushed with a mixture of the #29 with more white added.

The tracks were "metalisized" by dry brushing the silver/raw umber mixture in high contact areas. The parts of the links that make contact with the ground receive a special treatment. Then after drying overnight, the silver mixture was drybrushed on the surface of each link. Then using just the silver, I drybrushed all the surfaces which were previously hit with the darkened mixture. This gives the links a very realistic appearance.

The final step was to apply black pastel chalk around the muzzle brake and the exhaust stacks. I went a little heavier on the exhausts. I recommend that just before you think it looks good—stop. This is an often over done effect on many armor models (mine being no exception).

That's all folks!

I thought that basically the Bandai kit was excellent, especially considering its age. I definitely recommend this kit no matter what you want to do to it. I spent over 100 hours on this model and most of them were pretty enjoyable—with maybe the exception of the tracks. But I thought it was worth the extra effort it took.

Maybe one day we can entice VP into doing the earlier kit. I'll look forward to it.

—Brent Nelson

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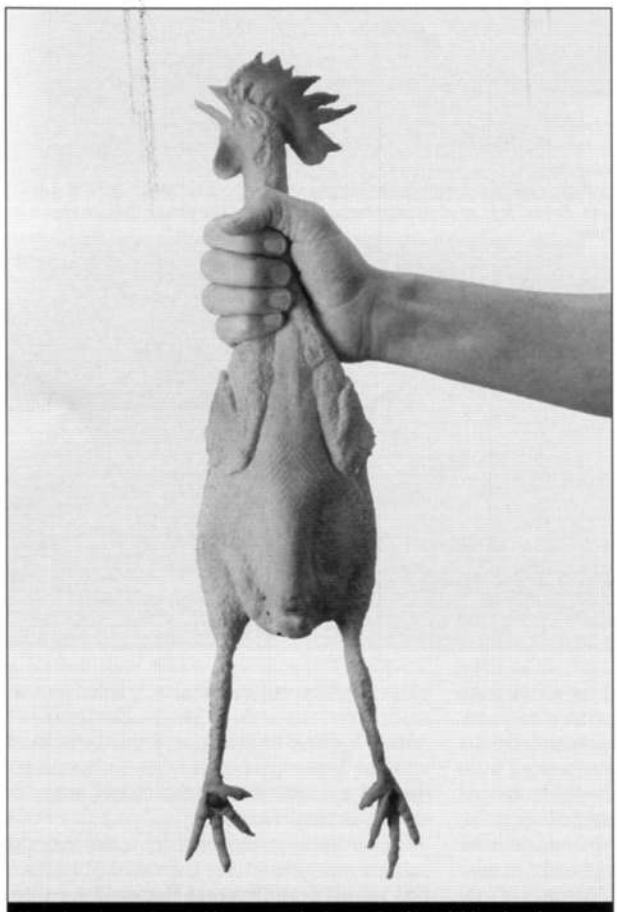
Bandai 1/15th scale Tiger I. Kit number unknown. Unfortunately my box was pretty badly beaten up as it was the original kit. I have heard of some of the distributors, such as the Right Stuff, picking up this kit. Ask your local hobby shop to check around. Expect a retail price of around $200.00

References

Tiger I by Uwe Feist and Bruce Culver, Ryton Publishing. Great shots of stripped down Tigers, museum shots as well as plentiful combat photos.

Tiger I and Sturmtiger in Detail by Uwe Feist and Bruce Culver, Ryton Publishing. The follow-up to the above title with many additional photos and some in color. Both books contain several excellent color plates of Tigers and I found these especially useful.



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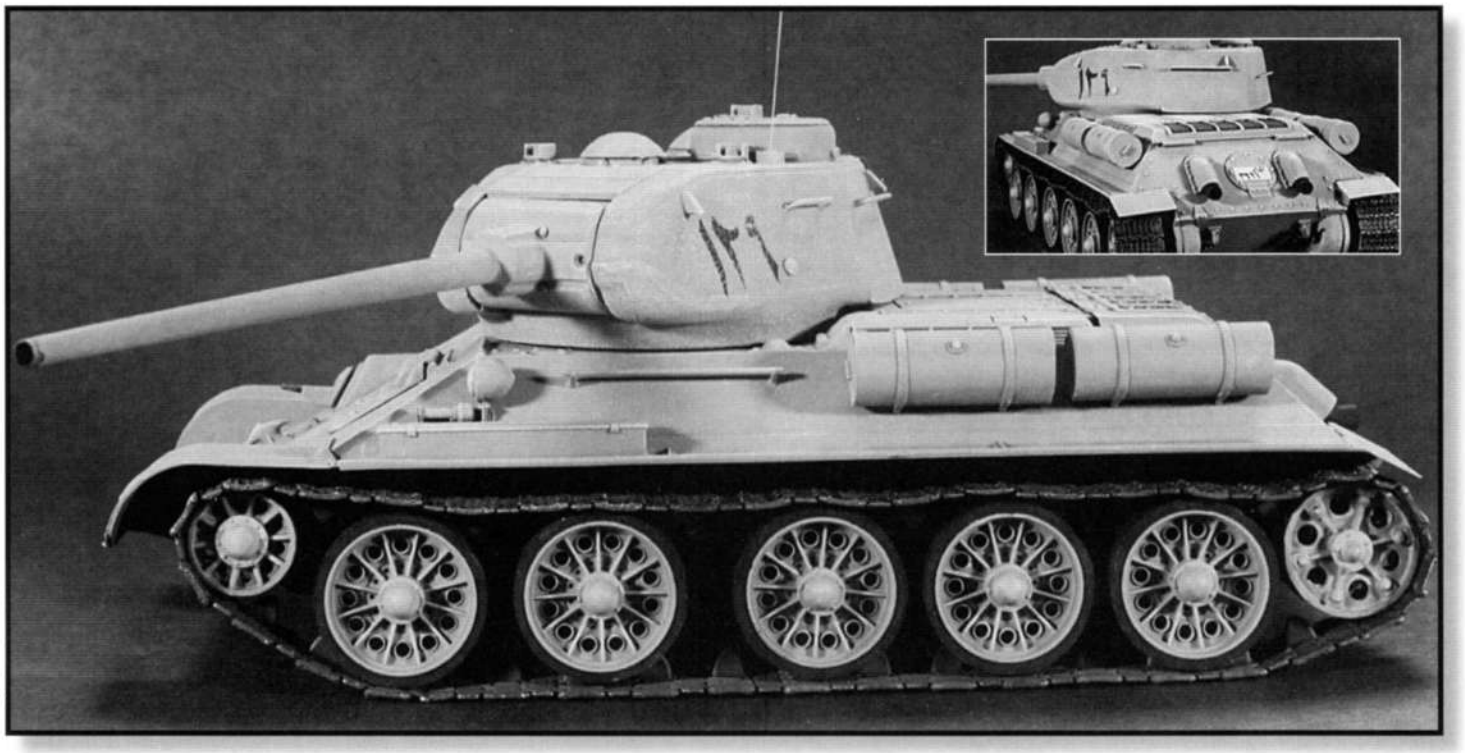
Russian, Russian T-34

A little bit of this, a little bit of that, makes an Egyptian T-34



All photos by Joe Morgan

Charlie Pace at APC Hobbies seems to have some sort of pipeline to the Eastern Bloc. With no fanfare or prior advertising, this set of conversion parts appeared from behind the Russian border, marketed by RPM but marked "Maquette LTD". (Those up on their French know "maquette" means "model".) The set is actually sold in three separate items, the turret, the tracks and the late wheels.

The turret is the late model, separated ventilator model, heretofore not seen in injection molded-plastic. The wheels are the late "starfish" pattern, also common on the T-44 and T-54.

I used a Zvezda (or Italeri) kit for this conversion mainly because I hadn't built one before and I was tired of filling the motorization holes in the Tamiya hulls. If I say that the conversion parts are inferior to the Zvezda parts, you can be sure that they are also inferior to the Tamiya ones. Overall, though, I found the Russian kit to be just fine. I've gotten used to their peculiarities, like the four piece lower hull.

An examination of the conversion sprues reveals that somewhere there is another complete kit of the T-34, and an interesting one at that. Included are the spring/shocks that go inside the hull sides of a Christie suspension set (like the Zvezda BT kit). A bunch of other parts are there too, like exhausts and tow hooks. The turret sprue includes a rudimentary but better than nothing breech end of the 85mm gun. Also included is a set of cylindrical fuel tanks that you need to update the Zvezda or Tamiya early model. And yes, the turret fits either the Japanese or Italian/Russian turret ring.

That's the good part. The bad part is that the parts are not very well cast. The wheels have good visible detail, but weren't flat on the tires, having a long sink mark marring every wheel. It took about a half hour with a belt sander to flatten 'em out, but you shouldn't have to do this. The conversion idler and drive sprocket were not as good as the Zvezda ones. The wheels do fit the Tamiya hull, but need to be opened up just a bit to fit the Zvezda (the wheel hubs measure .110 inside; the suspensions arms are .115).

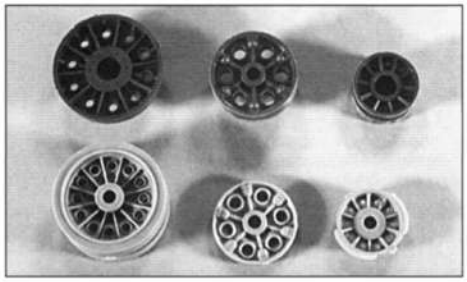
The turret has nice texture, but the roof, which should be smooth, is marred by no less than seven sink marks. The turret ventilators have sink marks. The cupola wasn't flat on the sides. All in all, when I had a choice, I used the Zvezda or, in some cases, Tamiya parts: all three manufacturer's parts were interchangeable with minor sanding or trimming.

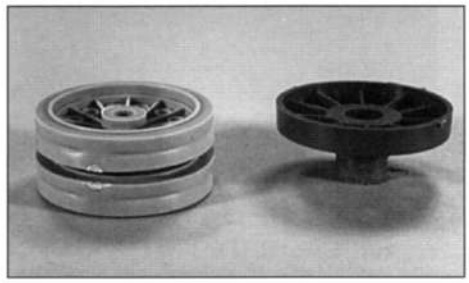
The track is the 500mm "Waffle" pattern, M-1942 (identified by the excellent article by Ing. Karl Brandel in the January 1996 issue of AFV News.) These were very common on late model vehicles and the T-44. The fit on these parts is excellent. No sanding is required. There are faint knock out marks on the inner faces, but only the very detail afflicted will need to deal with them.

Turret Construction

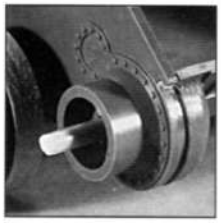
This is possibly the worst injection molded item I've ever seen. First, the sink marks in the roof and ventilators must be dealt with. I hate to putty, and you need a ton on this thing. After everything dries and is sanded flat, I proceeded with the 'real' construction.

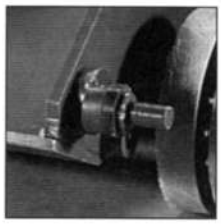
The plans are terrible. For example, the drawing of the mantlet, breech and gun barrel bear absolutely no resemblance to the actual parts. The plans show a one-piece breech and barrel assembly that is inserted through the mantlet. In actuality, the breech fits to the mantlet (poorly) with a post to fit the gun barrel. The barrel to mantlet fit is ghastly (I'm running out of negative words, here); I ended up gluing the barrel in by filling the hole in the mantlet with a big gob of putty and sticking the

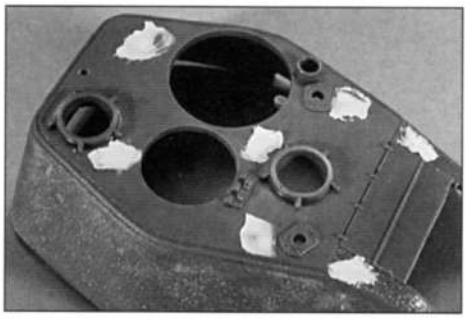


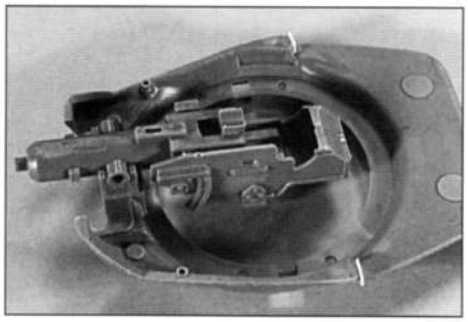


Near left: the top row are Zvezda parts, from left to right road wheel, drive sprocket, idler. The bottom row are the RPM parts in the same order. Far right: on the left the RPM road wheel (assembled), showing the long sink mark on the outside edge. On the right, the Zvezda road wheel, the early all metal type.









Top left: idler mount, showing the .030 shims needed to line up the idler with the road wheels. Top right: drive sprocket mount, made by inserting .150 sprue into the kit mount. Above left: the RPM turret roof, showing the seven sink marks that needed putty. Ugh. Left: lower turret half with the rudimentary 85mm gun breech. Above right: the conversion turret ready for paint. The darker parts are Tamiya ones, which fit with little sanding. Above: the finished model ready for paint.

barrel in. When it dried, I carved and sanded away the excess. I have never had to do this on an armor or any other model before. Then the mantlet didn't fit the opening in the turret! I had to add strips of ten thou styrene to each side.

The fit of the upper and lower turret sides was as bad as the rest. Putty, putty, more putty, with strip styrene thrown in, specifically at the sharp 90 degree angle in the lower part of the upper half. This showed about a sixteenth of an inch gap.

The detail parts were just as bad as the rest. I used Tamiya parts for the cupola, as the Russian parts were marred by sink marks. A Tamiya loader's hatch showed much better detail, so on it went, along with pistol ports and grab rails. When the thing was finished, it was about 60% Maquette, 30% Tamiya, and the rest Plastruct and Squadron putty.

Running Gear

After the road wheels were surfaced to eliminate the sink marks, they were drilled to accept the Zvezda suspension arms. The hubs were a bit deeper than either the Zvezda or the Tamiya wheels. I compensated for this by shimming out the idler by about .030. The drive sprocket axle was replaced by .150 sprue, as the Zvezda part wasn't long enough or tight enough to accommodate the extra length. I cut the hub caps off and glued them in place. Although I used the Maquette wheels, the idler and drive sprocket were the Zvezda parts; they were much better in detail and molding.

At this point the lower hull received a coat of 'sand', mixed from Pactra Africa yellow, light tan, and flat white, to match a color print of an Egyptian vehicle. The wheels, idlers, and drive sprockets also got a coat. Then the tires on the road wheels were painted black, and the outside rims and inside surfaces of the idlers and sprockets got a coat of gun metal.

Now for the tracks. This is the one part of this conversion that I can recommend. There is minimal cleanup, if you use a sharp knife to remove the shoes from the sprues. The fit is very good, just enough of a press so that liquid glue facilitates the join. Of course, they look much better than conventional tracks; you can put the sag in that was so much a feature of Russian vehicles and the links don't bend around the idlers and sprockets. The overall effect is much more realistic.

There's one tricky aspect. The shoes go together in sets of two, one with a guide horn and one without. When it comes time to join the top and bottom runs, what if you just need one shoe, and of course the one you need is not the one next in line? The solution is what I call the "morphodyte" shoe. Take one of each type shoe (there are plenty of extras) and cut it in half down the middle. Glue these two pieces together, and you have your gap filled. Do this under a road wheel and it's not noticeable.

The tracks were painted Pactra hull red, then drybrushed with gun metal on the wear areas. Installation on the running gear was with gel super glue, as normal. These tracks were the nicest part of the whole project!

Hull

This was a straight forward build of the Zvezda kit. The only Tamiya part that I substituted for a Zvezda one was the hull machine gun. Other than that, everything was OK; granted there was a little more sanding and fitting, but all in all it's a good kit. The only major alteration on the hull was the removal of the antenna mount, as the late /85 had the mount on the turret.

You'll need some cylindrical auxiliary fuel tanks to update the Zvezda kit, as it comes with the early rear mount box ones. Maquette provides some, but I didn't like their mounts, so I used Tamiya tanks. Strangely, the Maquette end caps fit better than the Tamiya ones, so the tanks are a mix.

Paint and Markings

I'm getting a bit tired of painting Russian stuff dark green; my Russian display case looks pretty dull. So like I mentioned above I went for an Egyptian vehicle just so I could use another color. The 'sand' I mixed up was lighter than Africa yellow; I matched the color to the color prints in Zaloga's *Armour of the Middle East Wars*. Hopefully the colors weren't botched in the printing.

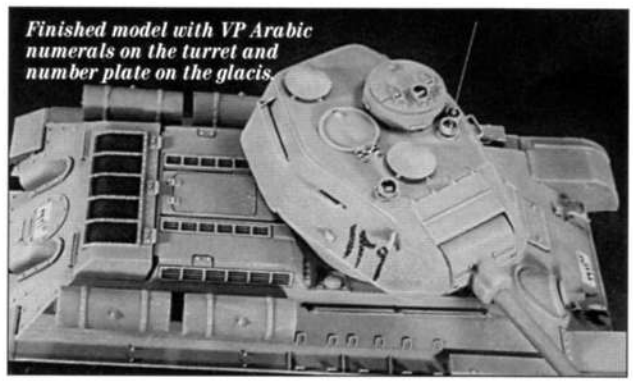
The markings are from Verlinden sheet 288, which has a bunch of Russian slogans and a few markings from the Mideast for T-34/85s. The most interesting looking ones were for a Syrian tank, but they were painted dark green, so they were out. I used the Egyptian set, which consists of a set of Arabic numbers (the ones I used are 129) and a set of number or license plates for front and rear. The plates were slightly out of register, so that I had to go back and paint around the red outlines with the base color.

Conclusion

The Zvezda kit is OK, on a par with the old Tamiya kits and you don't have to fill the holes in the hull. I wouldn't mind if somebody made an up to date T-34, though.

The turret is garbage, and should be avoided unless you absolutely have to have this version. The wheels are so-so. They take a good bit of work, but they look pretty good on the vehicle. The track set is nice, and should be part of your budget to build any of the later T-34s. As cheap as they are (less than ten bucks) there's no reason not to use 'em unless you can't find a set.

—Joe Morgan



Finished model with VP Arabic numerals on the turret and number plate on the glacis.

MMiR RECCE

Zvezda T-34 and all three conversion sets: APC Hobbies, PO Box 122, Earlysville VA 22936. Phone 804-973-2705

References

Russian Tanks 1900-1970 by John Milsom, Galahad, New York, 1970.

Armour of the Middle East Wars 1948-1978 by Steven Zaloga, Osprey Vanguard, London, 1981.

Mad Max

A highly cool looking addition to the German livery

Dicker Max. Now I'm still trying to figure that one out. The box top on this kit gives it this cool nick name, but I can't find it mentioned anywhere. Oh, by the way, what I'm talking about is a brand new kit from On-Track Model Co., official nomenclature: 10.5cm K18 auf Pz. Sfl IVa. What this is, is a positively wicked and bad-ass looking anti-tank gun plopped down onto the chassis of a Panzer IV (A model, I think).

The vehicle was an interesting experiment by the Germans at a time when they thought there would be no hurry for effective anti-tank weapons. They were wrong, weren't they?

Max was developed in response to the threat of such tanks as the Russian T-28 and the British Vickers Independent. I find it interesting because it seemed to inadvertently predict the future trend of German armor at a very early stage. The introduction of the T-34 and the Max's tour coincided rather closely. I wonder why production didn't continue.

The vehicle was produced only in limited numbers (2) and these were originally assigned to the 521st Panzerjäger Detachment which was to groove at the invasion of Gibraltar. When this gig didn't come off, they were sent east where they did see active service and reportedly did quite well. Of the two that went out, only one came back. The other had been destroyed, but I was unable to track down the cause of its demise.

One of the reasons this kit has never been done, in my humble opinion, is that information on it is very, very, sparse. I found only two publications with any mention of it. One of them is pretty obscure, but I have a sneaking suspicion that the master pattern builder for On-Track knows something we don't (as a side note, I should mention that there was once a conversion kit available of this, but the hull top was covered over and it disappeared pretty quickly).

On-Track is new on the scene, this is the first I have ever heard of them. But I will say that if all subsequent kits are like this they are going to do all right.

My Max

The kit is packed in a nice box with a color photo of the finished model. It's all resin in here baby. No white metal, no photo-etched brass. This is rare these days, only Cromwell springs to mind as another pure resinite.

The kit contains over one hundred parts, not counting the various multiples. The tracks are link-to-link resin and are a fine rendition of the 36cm track with the open horn.

The instructions contain what I regard as an essential element in any resin kit; a parts diagram. This is especially helpful due to the obscure subject matter. My knowledge of the Panzer IV only took me so far.

The instructions themselves are broken down into simple diagrams of the various construction sequences. The drawings, although reproduced well, are only cousins to the actual parts, so I recommend careful study before building. Helping out a great deal is another single sheet of photos of the finished kit. Again, these are OK, but they are photocopied, which makes them a bit difficult to make out.

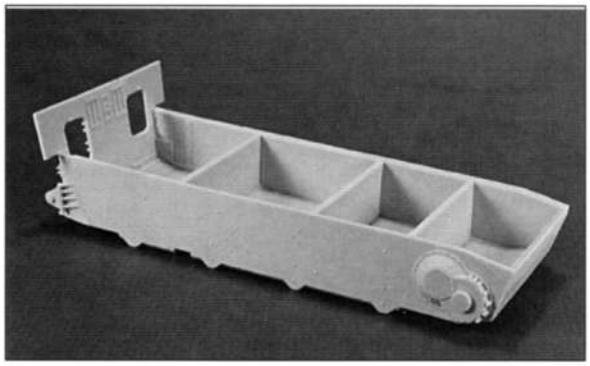
One of the first things I noticed about the kit is that all the resin castings are cast in a first rate manner and on top of that they all seem very complex and ambitious.

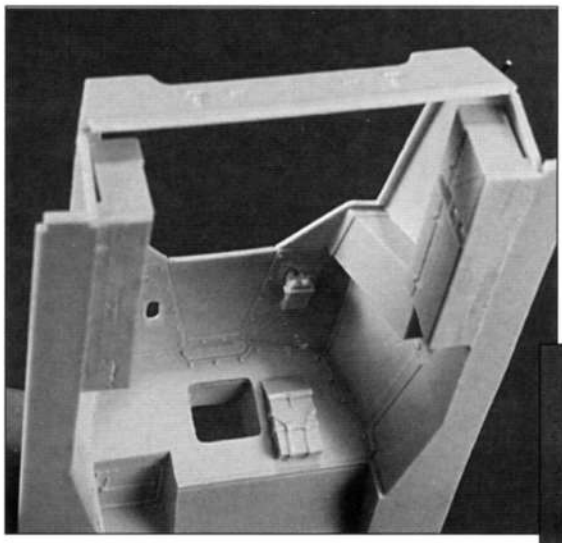
For example, the lower hull is cast as one-piece, which includes the rear hull, complete with hatch openings. The hull panel ends up being delicate, but I still dug this in a big way.

Puttin' it all together

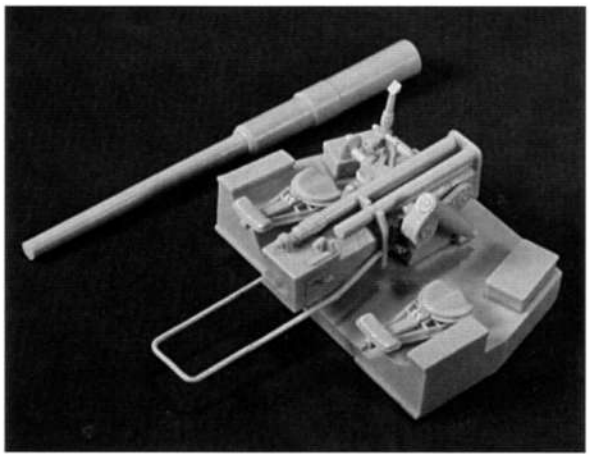
Assembly essentially centers around three things, the upper hull, lower hull and gun. All of the smaller parts make up these sub assemblies.

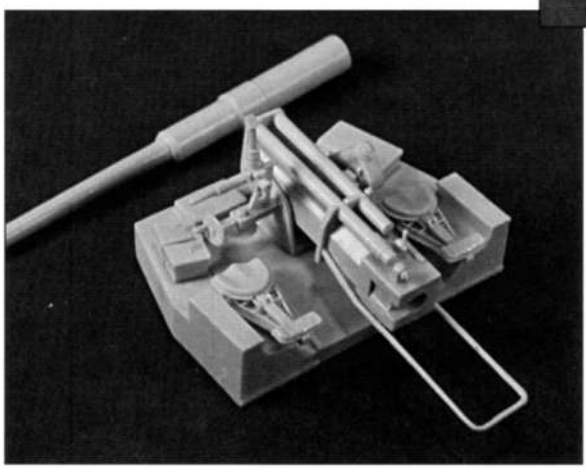
I started by cleaning everything up and I just made one big pile of parts. The overpours were roughly in the middle of what's out there. Not too





Far left: the naked hull. Note the integral rear panel and the location pips on the hull sides. Left: the beautifully detailed fighting compartment. This is before I installed the radio. Below left and right: the main gun module. This must be painted and weathered prior to installation. Inset: the two different muzzle brakes provided.





big, but not too small. Everything came off with little or no damage.

The most arduous part of construction was putting together the suspension. This is straight Panzer IV stuff. Anyone out there who's done the Tamiya or Italeri kits will find familiar turf.

All the components are separate with the exception of the final drive. The parts include all the suspension arms, wheels, bumpers and idler wheel posts. One feature I really liked was the small cam piece supplied for the idler wheel. This allows the wheels to be moved back and forth for proper tension.

I feel somewhat guilty telling you that I generally detest resin tracks. The reason for my guilt is that the On-Track tracks (as it were) are pretty cool looking and they are properly shaped and contain a perfectly formed open horn. Fortunately for me, I have a friend whose love of resin tracks is equal to my disdain, so I swapped him a set of the new 36cm ModelKasten plastic tracks (SK-26). More on these in a minute. One note: because my head is often mistaken for a log, I failed to realize that the new MK tracks are specially designed for the Panzer III and not the Panzer IV. As we all know, the tracks are longer on the IV and the Max requires even a few more links because the hill is slightly lengthened. I had two sets, so I liberally pilfered from the second set. I do know that MK plans to release a second set of tracks for the IV (same stock number, followed by a 'IV') which will include the extra links.

The lower hull went together in minutes and all the parts had very subtle locating points (as in small). This is kind of a neat idea as there is less chance that they will be mis-cast. This also means less chance of me weeping like a baby when I have to pry off resin parts and start all over because I put them in the wrong place.

I left the wheels off until painting and set the hull aside. I did pin the idler cams with brass wire so they would remain workable. Make sure to add the large center bin to the inside of the back hull early on. This helps keep that flimsy back hull from warping and it keeps everything square.

Der gross gun

The gun is built around a central module and some actual thought was put into this assembly (I like these guys already). The instructions are the most sketchy in this area. A couple of things to watch out for here. The gun's trunion should point forward. I missed this and it caused some of the aforementioned weeping. The recuperator tubes should butt against the forward edge of their mounts, too. Apparently, small pieces of rod should be added to the gaps. Also beware the proper position of the recoil basket frame. It should emanate from the breech base plate. This part is very delicate and is yet another example of On-Track's excellent casting.

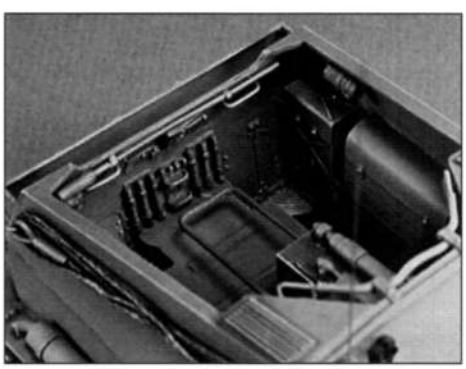
One last bit of trickery is that the sight on the left side of the gun must align with a hole on the top of the hull, so frequent test fitting is necessary.

I was greatly aided in all this by a photo I found in the Japanese magazine Ground Power (see Recce). The shot very clearly illustrates the gun and mount. Based on what's in this photo I found even more reason to commend On-Track. They didn't miss a single detail that I could see.

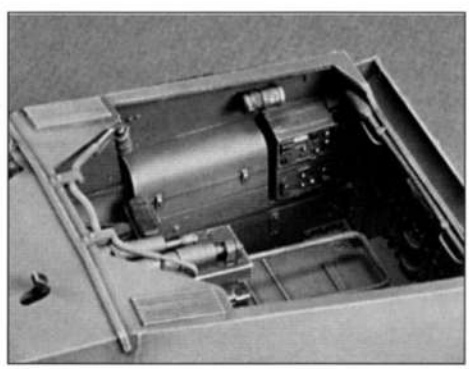
On-Track gives you the choice of two muzzle brakes, the one seen in factory shots or the type seen in the field. This may be the difference between the two prototypes, I dunno. In any event, the muzzle brake gets left off until after final assembly, otherwise it won't fit through the hull opening. The gun module also got set aside when it was done.

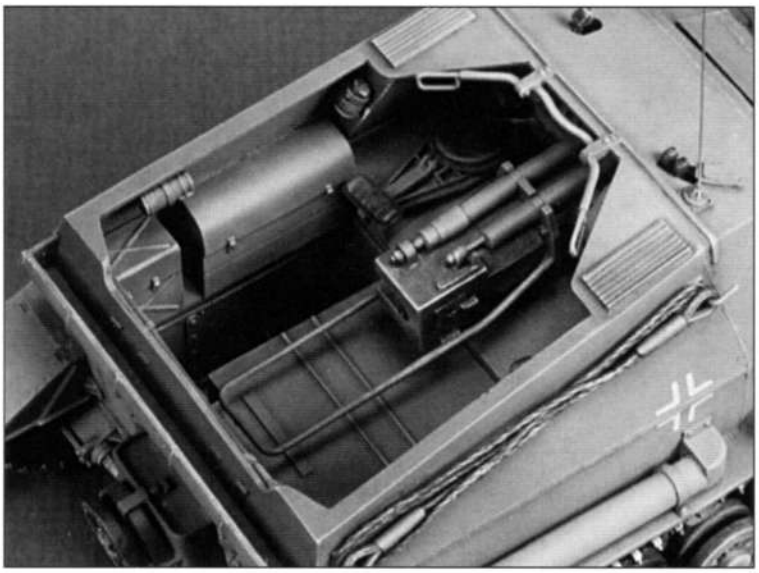
Herr Hull

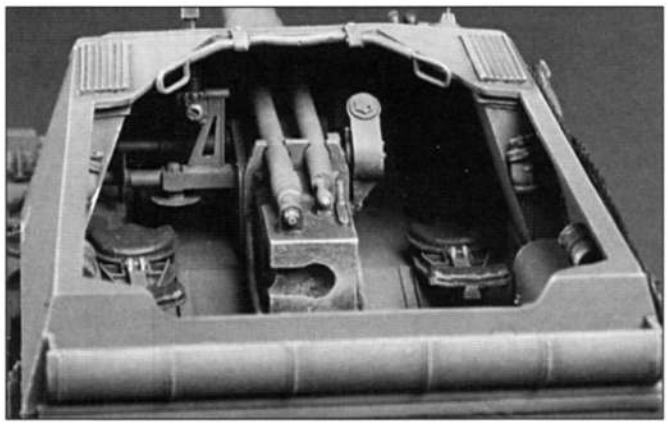
The hull was pretty simple. This is, again, a superbly cast single piece. All that gets added is teeny detail parts. This includes a full suite of tools and small equipment bits. There is also a funky looking rod arrangement that gets added to the upper hull. I can't for the life of me tell you what it

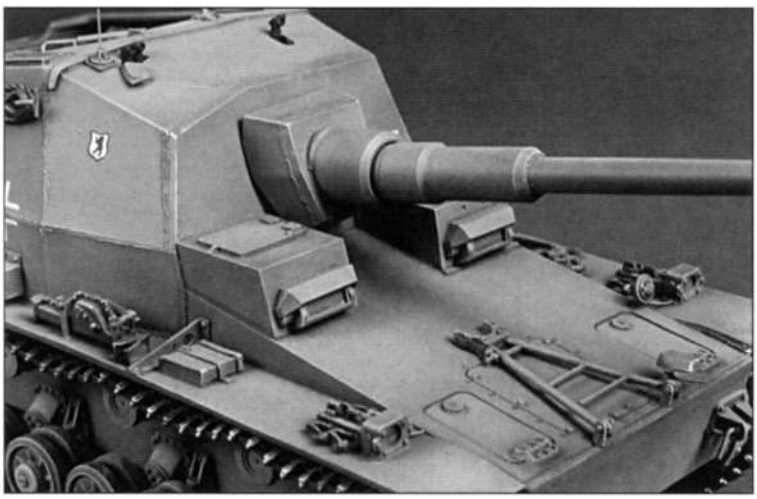


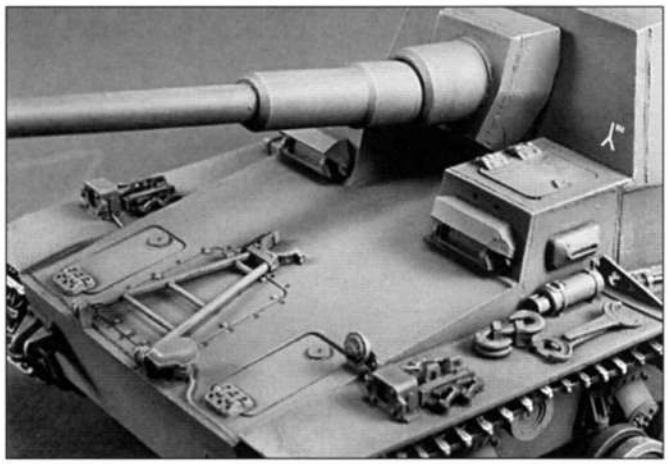
Left: the left hand side of the fighting compartment. Right: the right hand side with the VP radio installed (somewhat in shadow). Inset: the radio antenna and the gunner's scope.











Top left: another view down into the fighting compartment. My added tow cable is evident. Top right: the front end of the compartment (it gets dark in there). Note that wacky handle device above the gun. Left: the mantlet and front end showing some of that weld bead detail and my bear marking. Above: the opposite side, note the other 3rd Panzer Division marking. Below the distinctive early Panzer IV wheels.

is, but it is very accurate to the photo.

It was at this point that I went back to the lower hull and added the grenade rack and equipment to the inside of the back hull panel. I had a lot of trouble figuring out the correct assembly of the grenade rack, but I took my best guess. It is almost visible in one of the photocopies. Curses.

You get a choice of both opened and closed armored covers for the front; separate tranny covers and a drivers hatch are also thrown in. No tranny elements are provided in the kit, but I assume the designers figured there are enough on the market already.

Let me digress for a second and tell you about a couple of details I added due to my severe detailing disease. The first is a tow cable on the top of the right side superstructure. It's present in the photo of the prototype, so I assume it remained in the field. The shot in *Encyclopedia of German Tanks* is from the left. The cable is waxed string and the heads are from the Tamiya tool set for the Panzer IV.

The second is a radio set. The photo mentioned above clearly shows a dude in the tank wearing a headset and an antenna popping up from the right side of the upper hull. It stands to reason that as both a prototype and a tank destroyer it would have both a receiver and a transmitter set. Where to stick this is another question. There are large stowage bins whose lids would clearly interfere with the sets if they were mounted side by side. My theory is that they were stacked in place of the smaller bin located in the right rear corner of the fighting compartment (the bin and the radios are almost exactly the same size).

So... I removed said bin and replaced the missing sponson section with styrene. I then added a radio set from the VP set for the UHU half-track (#721). This is a stacked set and includes the frame. The antenna mount also comes from the Tamiya tool set. Its location is also a bit of a guess, but I stuck it on the top right side of the hull more or less where it appeared in the photo.

Paint? Already?

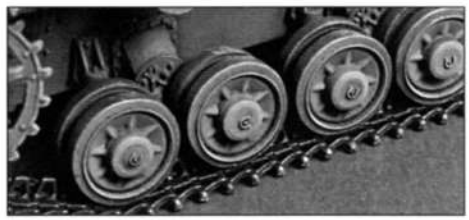
At this point I had to stop and paint the whole thing due to the rather hidden nature of many areas of the kit. I chose a nice shade of dark gray to represent a vehicle of the 3rd Panzer Division which used the Max in Russia (these must have been used in some phase of Barbarossa because the remaining vehicle was returned to Germany by October of 1941).

I started by spraying the inside of the lower hull and this needs to be complete to add two triangular brackets to this area. I then sprayed the gun mount and gun, and the inside of the upper hull. This also included the two large stowage bins which form the sponson and help strengthen the side walls.

I continued by doing all the detail painting in these areas, as well as all the weathering, because they just cannot be reached later.

When everything was sufficiently dry, I finished the base assembly.

As I mentioned at the top, I used the new MK



36cm tracks. These used the standard assembly jig and assemble about ten links at a time. So that I could really wail on these babies, I tried a little something different. I took a eighth-inch strip of double-sided tape and mounted it to the edge of a steel ruler. I then positioned each link on it, using the straight edge to keep everything aligned. Once the links were all lined up, I inserted the pins after dipping them in a small puddle of superglue. I gently twisted the pins back and forth until the glue cured. This causes the pins to fall away from their sprues. When all the links are done, I gently run a fine sanding stick down each side to remove any small burrs.

The horns were added next and the same technique was used with the sanding stick on the top of each horn. This allows you to hit all the areas more or less at once and using the ruler method cuts assembly time in half. Just be careful pulling them up.

The tracks were mounted on a piece of cardboard, one facing up and the other down. I used push pins to secure them.

I painted them with a track color made up of black, silver and red. I use Polly-Scale acrylics. I gave them several good coats, periodically flopping them. This is easy given the acrylics super fast drying time.

Prior to pulling them off the cardboard I gave them a dry brush of gunmetal and a little silver.

Wrap it up man!

At this point I put all the elements together. Being careful with the superglue helped cut down on the touch-ups. I carefully stuffed facial tissue into the fighting compartment to mask it for the final paint job.

This was more of the same dark gray with lighter oversprays for effect.

How to mark up your Max? Good question. According to the *Encyclopedia of German Tanks*, the tanks saw service with the 3rd Panzer Division sometime in 1941. The photo in this book shows what appears to be a bright sunny day on the steppes. So sunny in fact that our Max has enough light shining on it to almost completely obscure a marking on its front angled hull panel. There is something there, but I can't make out what it is.

Now the 3rd used a nifty bear symbol which in other photos was usually found on the front of the turret. Several styles and colors are known to have been used, but for our time period it was a large fellow in white, red, yellow or blue (the color changed depending on the company), or a crest-shaped symbol with a bear in it. What is there is small, so I hereby decree that what I see is the bear crest.

Mr. Bear is found on a truckload of decal and dry transfer sheets. I opted for the VP sheet (#232) which has a cracking good bear crest in black with a white background.

The 3rd also used the inverted Y symbol with two adjacent bars. On Panzer IIIs and IVs from the same time, this symbol was used with the bear marking and was found near the drivers visor. Sounded good to me. As providence would have it, this is also on the VP sheet. The sheet only has one of the crest, but I did have an extra one laying around.

Clearly visible is a big ol' balkenkruz and that was added from a Tamiya sheet.

Once the decals had thoroughly dried, I washed the model with thinned burnt sienna and black oils, (let it dry!) then drybrushed with lighter shades of gray and tan.

The final touch was using pastels to create a rust color on the large right side muffler. This always looks cool against the dark gray.

I got a kick out of my Max. There are no building problems and that's saying a lot when regarding resin kit. The kit appears accurate in most respects, although I did notice more of the inside fender showing in the photos than what appears in the kit. This would indicate to me that the angle of the front hull is too shallow. However there was a difference between the factory prototype and the fielded one (the muzzle) so there may have been others as well.

I would have liked to have seen the radio set included, but perhaps they weren't willing to conjecture like I was.

The biggest drawback of the kit is the price. It is listed at $139.00 which is the upper range for resin kits of this size and complexity. It can be found somewhat cheaper now (see below). The biggest plus is that On-Track didn't insult my intelligence by offering up crap, simplifying or otherwise shortcutting the details and casting. They did their homework well. I can hardly wait for 35002!

—Pat Stansell

MMiR RECCE

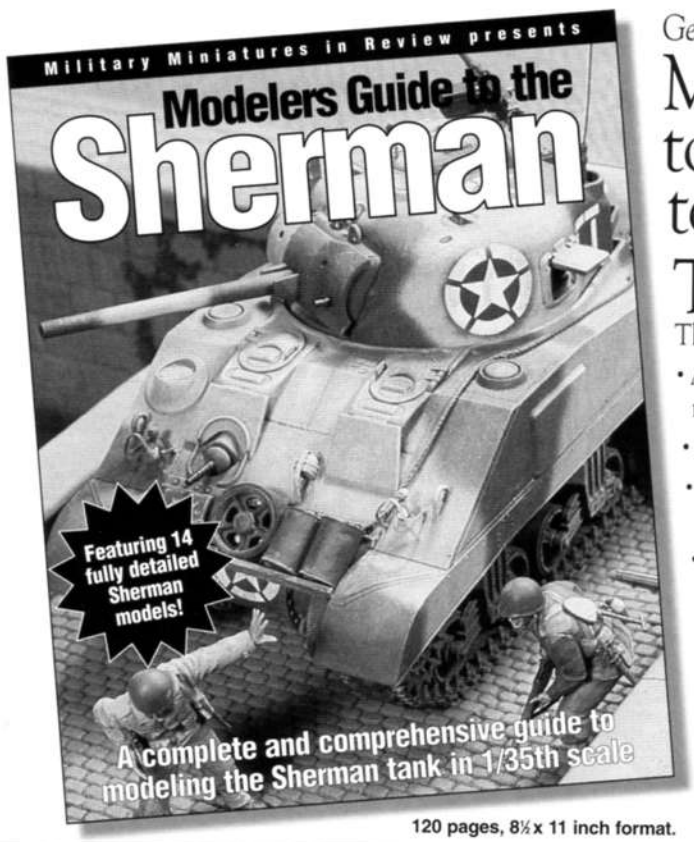
On-Track Model Co. 10,5cm K 18 auf Pz Sfl IVa - "Dicker Max." Kit number 35001.
Kit graciously provided by the manufacturer. Suggested retail $139.00.
See MMiR 11-12 for the address of On-Track. Also available for less through R&J models. See ad elsewhere in this mag. If anyone else has another source, let us know (and we'll print it).

References

Encyclopedia of German Tanks of World War Two, Revised Edition, by Peter Chamberlain and Hilary Doyle, Arms and Armour Press, 1993. Contains the one field shot and two shots of the factory prototype along with a brief description and specs.

Ground Power, No. 22, 1996, No. 3, Delta Publishing. More of the factory stuff plus that magical and awesome shot of the interior. Woof! Woof!

Sturmartillerie, Self-Propelled Guns and Flak Tanks Part II, Aero Armor Series No. 4 by Walter J. Spielberger and Uwe Feist, Aero Publishing, 1967. A blast from the past. If you bought this new, crown yourself a prince among geeks. The factory shots are in here.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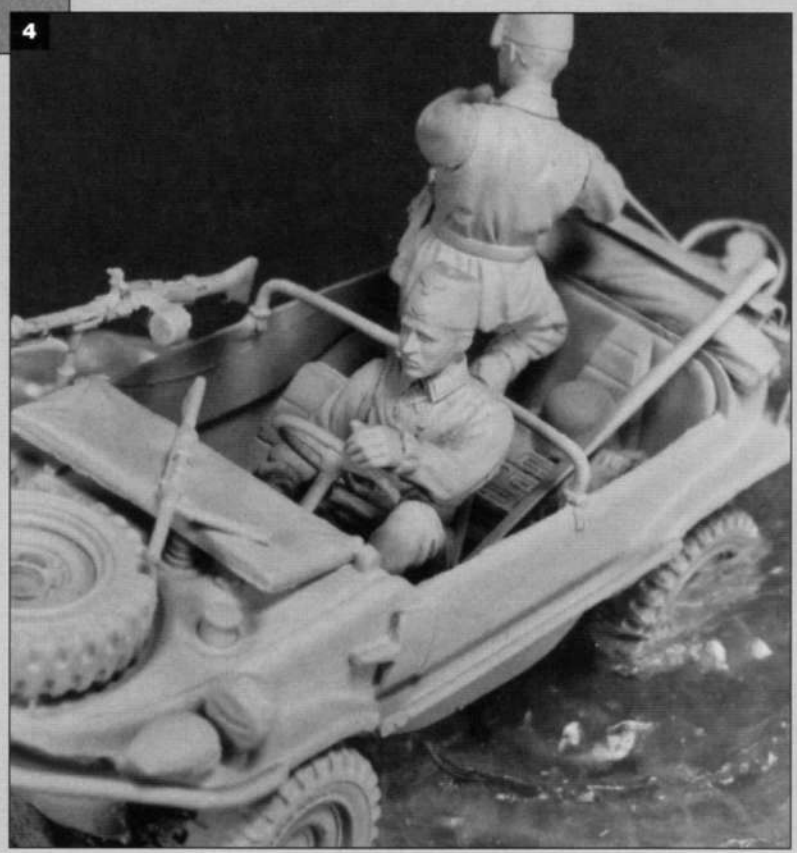
Mini-Men

A Look at What's New on the Figure Front

Mini-Men takes a breath! Even more format niggling (it never stops) as we offer up this somewhat abbreviated form of the feature (compared to last time anyway). More great sets are flooding into our offices each day and we have some extremely exciting items in store for issue 14.



Dragon

DML has offered up an entire **German MG42 Heavy Machine Gun Team,** 6064 **(1)**. This is a four figure set and it includes all the members of the text book MG team. We've got a gunner, loader, commander and a guy using the large range finder. The MG42 is completely decked out with its tripod and sighting device. Our crew is dressed up in basic Wehrmacht stuff with jackboots and a full complement of marching gear.

In one of the weirder twists of WWII, various Russian Cossack units fought with the Germans on the Eastern front. Serving with both the Wehrmacht and the SS, they retained elements of their traditional costumes while in service. DML has given us another set of horse mounted dudes depicting these wild men of the steppes. 6065, **German Cossack Cavalry (2)** is a two horse set complete with angry looking guys wielding their Cossack swords (called shashkas). One guy wears a standard German style tunic and a papakha fur hat, while the other wears the traditional Cossack cherkesska coat with its integral gaziri cartridge pouches on the chest. DML also has provided the characteristic bashlyk hood as a separate plastic piece. This helps create the effect of movement on the figure.

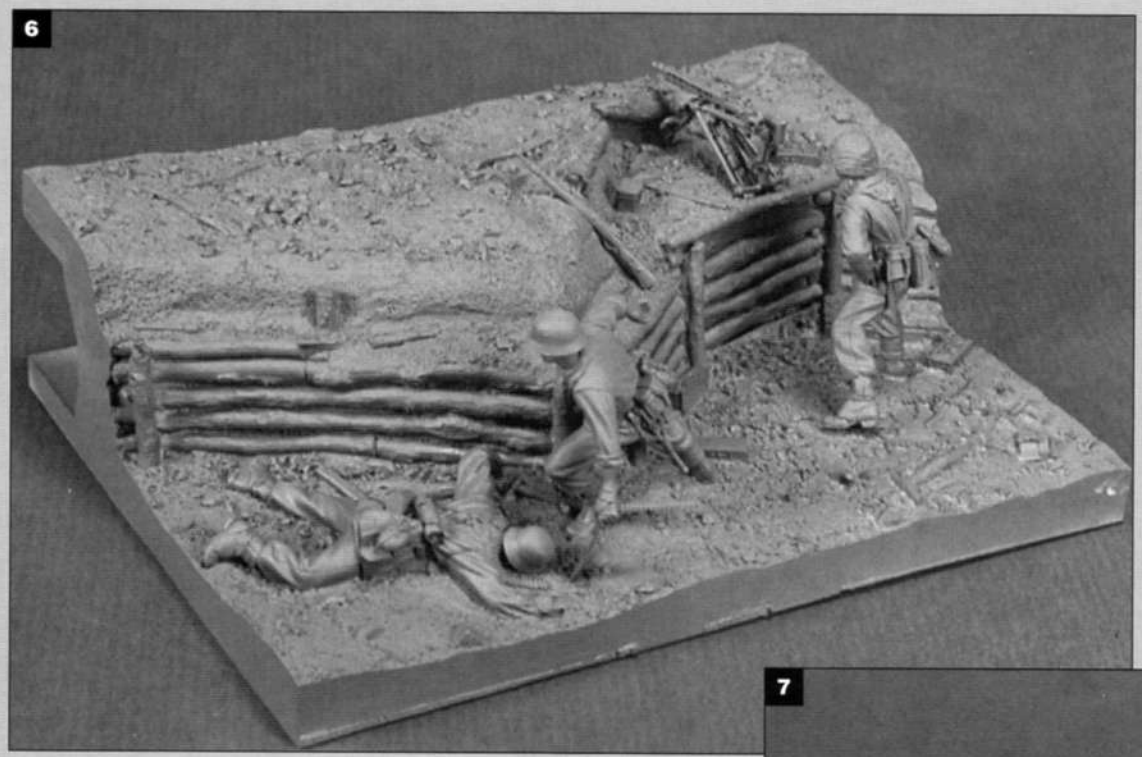
The horse furniture is German, of course, as this was a German unit. We're looking forward to some Russian horse furniture (hint, hint). We now have even more 1/35th horses to use.

Jaguar

Jaguar is really starting to come up with a hole slew of unique and unusual stuff. 63602 is **"Schi-jäger am feind," (3)** a neat little vignette of two German ski troops comin' on down a snowy bluff. A highly creative idea.

63605 makes up **The Short Cut, Bosnia 1944 (4)**. The scene is a Schwimmwagen emerging from the water. The driver... well... drives, and the other crewman reaches back to retrieve the prop mechanism. This impressive set comes with a complete resin Schwimmwagen and base, plus a section of clear resin "water." The cool part about the water is that the rear wheels are set up to fit into the water in a totally realistic fashion. The cats inside are wearing fez's and as such are from the SS Division "Handschar," although it would be easy to swap out head gear to represent a different unit. The buggy is fully equipped with an MG34, ammo cans, helmet and ammo cans.

Action abounds with 63606, **Trench Defenders Sector #3, B (5)** and 63606, **Trench Defenders Sector #3, C (6)**. These are both fully molded vignettes each illustrating a section of German trench work about to be over run by advancing Russians. Set B (where's A?) shows two Germans picking off a Russian, pretty much in mid-air. Set C depicts an MG42 emplacement where the gun has run out of ammo. One figure charges to replenish while the other begins to whip out his Luger.

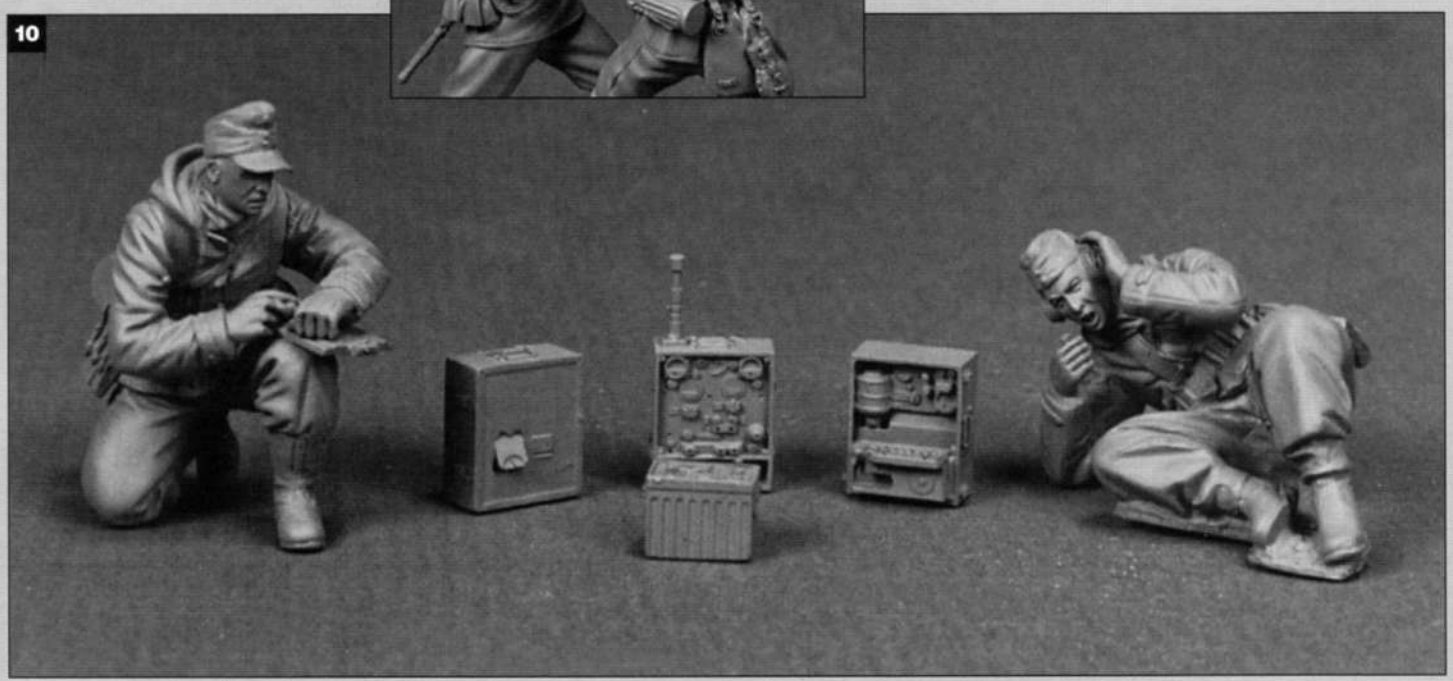


Both sets include a fully detailed one-piece molded base with all kinds of stuff stuck right on—including a dead dude on set C. The two bases do fit together side by side, but it's not clear if this was the designer's intention because the match is not perfect.

Construction is super simple although the MG represents a challenge in resin. We have to admit to loosing the head of the dying Russian in set B (our vacuum was hungry). The head included is molded with a soft cap. The replacement is from the Hornet range.

Set 63025 is **Casualties of War (7)**, a two figure set of dead and dying Russian soldiers. The first comes as part of a molded base and is exquisitely rendered complete with helmet (with liner) and a PPSH. The second figure is much more dramatic, showing a soldier at the moment of a bullet's impact. Gruesome but highly effective. More great molding here with the figure's rain cape flowing out behind him. Both the helmet and the rifle can be positioned so that they are falling away from the figure for even greater effect.

A somewhat calmer theme, 63031 is a **Wounded German w/Medic (8)**. Another effective instant scene, it's a German officer getting aid from a medic. The medic wears late war gaiters and uniform and carries a single pouch. The prone officer is nicely sculpted with his tunic open and folded back.



(9) Close Encounter, 63030, gets real nasty, demonstrating in resin just exactly how a German soldier received the Close Combat Clasp. There is real action here folks, as a German gets a Russian acquainted with the business end of his entrenching tool. Excellent casting abounds here, too.

VP

In the midst of some very nice stuff, every once and a while VP throws in something that really makes you go "hubba-hubba." 1240, **German WWII Radio team (10)** is such a set. In addition to the superbly rendered field radio set (including transmitter, receiver and batteries) are two wonderfully sculpted figures. The animation on the "transmitter" is really outstanding as he yells into the mike. Both figures are shown in winter gear, with the "recorder" wearing heavy fur lined boots. This little scene would look great tucked into the corner of a bombed out building.

1241, **"Morning"** is a two figure set with two Germans practicing the whole hygiene thing **(11)**. One shaves while the other checks himself out in the mirror (admiring his handy work, no doubt). One figure wears long pants and jack boots, while the other wears shorts (and what looks to be either a demin panzer wrap or an M44 tunic). They could be used together (say, in an Italian setting) or separately.

(12) VP gets into the action market with its version of **Bail Out!** (1249). Two Germans exit a hatch in a most rapid fashion. We liked the way the lifting figure is crouched. He logically appears more able to lift the weight of a grown man in this position. They are depicted on the box top coming out of a StuG, but we assume they would be suitable for a variety of tanks and vehicles.

1255, gives us two **Fallschirmjäger (13)**. They are basically hanging out, one with the cut down para helmet and properly tucked up jump smock and the other with the standard Stahlhelm and a more casual unsnapped smock. One appears to be smoking while the other is about to munch on a serious looking piece of chocolate. We've switched the "action" arms from the poses on the box top and in this configuration the one guy appears to regard the chocolate with some suspicion!

1268 is **The Rescue (14)**, a two in one type figure depicting one Waffen SS soldier carrying another on his back. The piece is well executed with the walking figure showing the proper amount of bend considering the weight of the human on his back. His free arm is also appropriately thrust out to aid in balance. Well done. Both wear camo smocks and the walking figure totes along his machine pistol. The two figures are molded as one, so there are no complex alingment problems. Just the heads and hands are separate pieces.

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